

Roman Catholic Diocese of Nelson



# Parish Catechist

## Quick Start MiniTrack Book 1

Who do you say that I am?

(Matthew 15:16)

Revised: March 2022

Therefore, take these words of mine into your heart and soul.  
Bind them on your arm as a sign, and let them be as a pendant on your forehead.  
Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you are at home and when you are away,  
when you lie down and when you get up, and write them on the doorposts of your houses  
and on your gates, so that, as long as the heavens are above the earth, you and your children  
may live on the land which the LORD swore to your ancestors he would give them.

Deuteronomy 11: 18-21

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
on your own intelligence do not rely;  
In all your ways be mindful of him,  
and he will make straight your paths.*

Proverbs 3: 5-6

**Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"**

John 11: 25-26

Yet just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down  
And do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful,  
Giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats,  
So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;  
It shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me, achieving the end for which I sent it.

Yes, in joy you shall go forth, in peace you shall be brought home;  
Mountains and hills shall break out in song before you, all trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Isaiah 55: 9-12

## **In this guide you will find:**

### **Part I - Parish Catechist Quick Start MiniTrack**

Introduction and Schedule (pages 1 – 5)

### **Part II - Supplemental Resources**

Quick Start readings & internet references (pages 6 – 55)

### **Part III - Beyond Quick Start**

See Book 2 – explore CORNERSTONE Workshops

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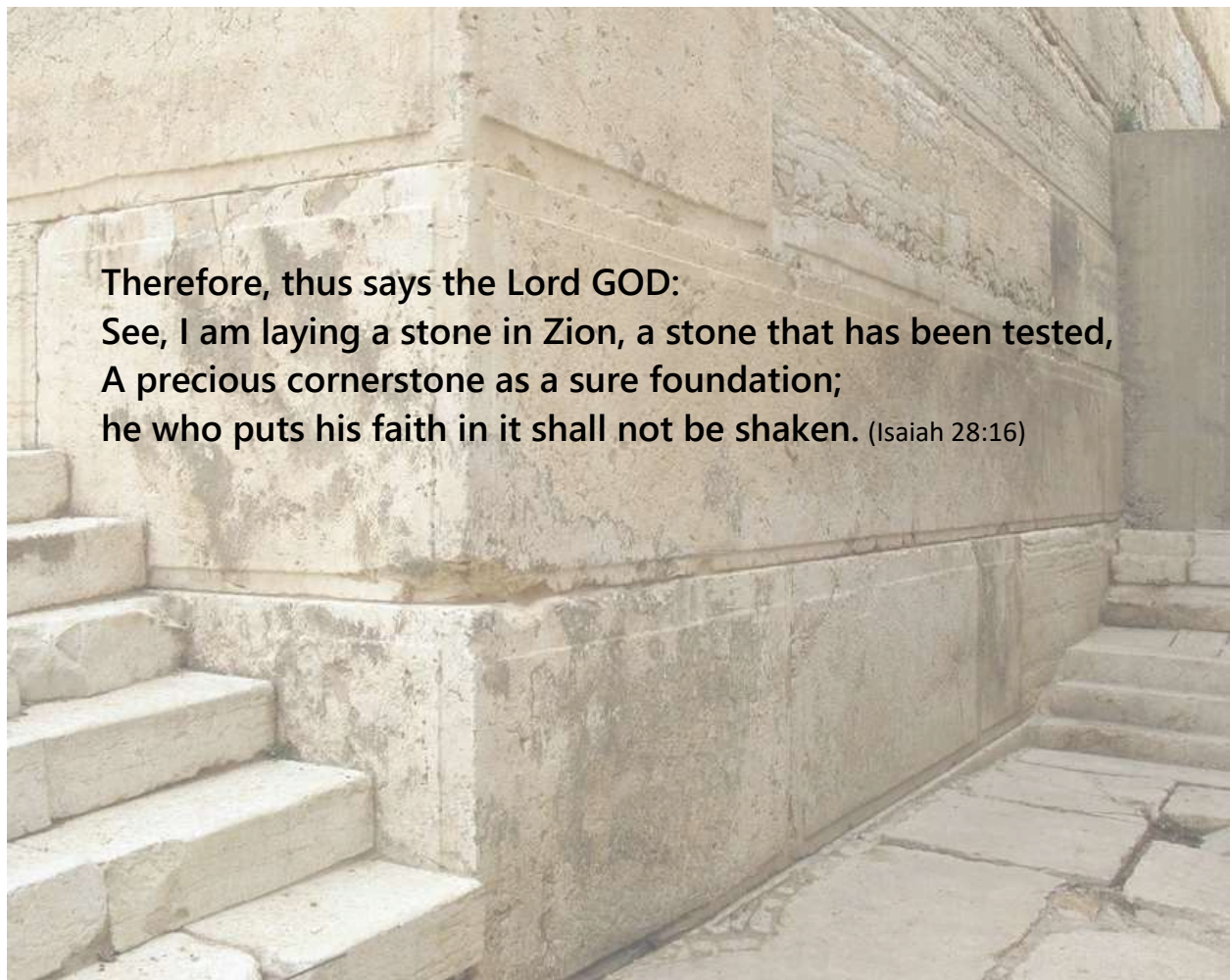
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# CORNERSTONE

Since ancient times, the cornerstone is traditionally the first stone laid for a building. Usually the largest, most solid, and most carefully constructed, the cornerstone orients the building in a specific direction and becomes the measure by which all other stones are laid. A cornerstone laid with care becomes the structure's sure foundation, the true measure by which the building will grow and endure.

In both the Old and New Testaments, we understand Jesus Christ is *our* cornerstone, the foundation of the Church and of all God's people.



**Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:  
See, I am laying a stone in Zion, a stone that has been tested,  
A precious cornerstone as a sure foundation;  
he who puts his faith in it shall not be shaken. (Isaiah 28:16)**

As catechists and catholic educators we are called to orient ourselves to Jesus Christ, and “like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5).

Cornerstone aims to help you situate both your learning *and* teaching on this sure foundation *in the person and divinity of Jesus Christ*, the key to all human thriving and our way to eternal life.

## Welcome to the Parish Catechist MiniTrack



We encourage all catechists – either in stable ministries or just “catechists for a season” – to consider engaging in the **CORNERSTONE** program for parish catechists. Not only will Cornerstone equip you for catechetical ministry, it can contribute greatly to a better adult understanding and practice of our Catholic faith.

**However ...** for those who need to ramp up quickly, the diocese offers the **PARISH CATECHIST MINITRACK** to provide the quick-start bare bones of “how-to” for children’s catechism.

If your pastor volunteered you in June for catechism in September and you’ve never done this before, you can complete this small group of online workshops over the summer months with just one segment (about 20 minutes) each week, leaving plenty of time to organize your calendar and lesson plans.

Keep in mind too, the many resources available to you on the diocesan website, including pre-arranged lesson calendars for *Alive in Christ*, *Confirmed in the Spirit*, and *Chosen*; lesson and activity suggestions; internet resources; and much more!

Just visit the diocesan Faith Formation page at [www.nelsondiocese.org](http://www.nelsondiocese.org), select **Coordinator** on the right-hand menu, and log in with user name: **coordinator** and password: **comeHolySpirit**.

And remember,

*“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if ... to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” (Evangelii Nuntiandi 41)*

Someone encouraged you to be a catechist because they recognized a reflection of God’s goodness in you. And, just like Mary, you answered “Yes!” to this call. Thank you! for your generosity in choosing to share your Christian life with others.

Be authentic. Be yourself. Teach the truth of the Gospel as it is laid out in your text, but don’t restrict yourself to the text alone. Be bold in bringing these same truths to life by sharing your own creativity, gifts, and life experience.

May God bless you in your endeavours.

## A Note about *Franciscan at Home* Workshops

The Diocese of Nelson has partnered with Franciscan University of Steubenville to offer unprecedented access to graduate study professors, authors, and popular presenters of the Catholic faith. At the same time, the online platform provides convenient, consistent, local access to our diverse parish and school communities across the Okanagan and Kootenay regions.



Each workshop intentionally draws you into a more personal and practical understanding of your Catholic faith through five essential elements:



- 1) introduction through short **VIDEO** segments which, added together, total about 60 minutes per workshop
- 2) each video is followed by a **TASK** to draw you into a personal, practical, and deeper knowledge of the theme
- 3) an online space to record your **ANSWER** or experience with the task, confidential to you only or, with your permission, shared with your mentor
- 4) Franciscan's **FEEDBACK** to your response, visible after saving your answer online, and, ideally,
- 5) time to **SHARE** your experience or questions with colleagues undertaking the same workshop (in small group study).

With a few notable exceptions (ex. *Being Guided and Guiding Souls*), **each workshop takes an average 2 to 4 hours to complete.** By prayerfully working through the essential elements of each segment in order, we can grow in understanding and intimacy with God our Creator through the *gradual* pedagogy of Jesus the Teacher under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

While Quick Start can be completed alone using the online workshops and guide, ideally you will share your experiences in a small study group at your church, either weekly, monthly, or at the end of each workshop. Sessions may be hosted by your RE coordinator or learners may be expected to take turns leading a small group, wholly relying on Franciscan's presenters and response feedback for the educational component. Ask your RE coordinator for more information.

If a local small group is not practical, check the Office of Faith Formation website for multi-parish study groups by videoconference, or, for even greater flexibility, continue on your own or with a mentor.

Online access to Bible and Catechism is available in the **RESOURCES** at the right of the screen, but consider using your own so you can bookmark favourite verses or record your thoughts in the margins over time.

**REMEMBER**, these workshops are designed for practicable weekly reflection and spiritual growth.

Each weekly reading, video, or workshop segment (video, assignment, response, and response feedback) can be accomplished in about 20 - 30 minutes of focused work, sometimes less and on rare occasions a bit more. Workshop answers should be point-form - aimed at creating clarity rather than a literary masterwork. Authentic spiritual and religious growth occurs in the gradual progression through each weekly assignment and, ideally, sharing your experience with others. Be encouraged to follow through on assignments as described and ordered. Feedback to your response will only be visible after entering a response and selecting 'SAVE'.

If you enjoy this MiniTrack, be encouraged to continue with **CORNERSTONE!**

## Schedule

### PARISH CATECHIST QUICK START MINITRACK

Complete

Workshop: Child Catechetical Methodologies and Learning Styles

Read &  
Reflect

*The Twelve Articles of the Catholic Faith*, pages 7 - 8, **AND**  
Appendix 1 – *The #1 Obstacle to Kids Encountering Christ*, The Religion Teacher

Complete

Workshop: Sacred Scripture: The Big Picture

Quiz &  
Review

Appendix 3 – *The Bible Blueprint*, Joe Paprocki  
Take the Quiz (pgs. xx) and review where necessary

Read &  
Reflect

Appendix 3 – *Prayer, The Soul of Our Teaching*

### SOME SUGGESTIONS IF YOU'D LIKE TO GO FURTHER ...

Optional

Workshop: Connecting Child Development with Catechetical Methodology, **OR**  
Workshop: Principles of Sacramentality

Optional

Workshop: The Ecclesial Method

Optional

Appendix 4 – Introduction to *Echoing the Mystery*, Prayers: The Our Father

And of course, if you find yourself enjoying the *Franciscan at Home* workshops, be encouraged to continue with your own selections, or start the **CORNERSTONE Track for Parish Catechists!**

## Getting Started

Create your own personal *Franciscan at Home* account. If you move to another parish within the diocese, you can attach your account to the subscription for the new parish. If you move outside the diocese, you may decide to continue access through a personal monthly subscription.

Your account is your own. Parish administrators can see which workshops you start or complete, but your personal responses are visible only to you, and a mentor if you choose to share your responses.

*Some workshops are common to multiple tracks. The terms school teacher, educator, catechist, learner, and even parent, are often used interchangeably. Translated from the original Greek, catechesis means “to echo” the mystery of God. At the heart of all Catholic vocations, we are catechists.*

Any number of workshops can be open concurrently. Begin a workshop from your **DASHBOARD**. **START** the track or use the **SEARCH** function to find an individual workshop. Select the workshop and choose **START** again for access to workshop segments.

### To create your account:

Access the site at [www.franciscanathome.com](http://www.franciscanathome.com) and follow the instructions provided on the following page.

While the Parish Catechist Quick Start MiniTrack can be completed on your own, we recommend you ask your parish RE Coordinator or priest to serve as mentor, or complete the workshops with fellow catechists. If you decide to follow through with the more complete CORNERSTONE Orientation, and wish to receive a certificate for your work (highly recommended!) then you will be expected to choose a mentor at that time.

*Note: We recommend using an email address you will always have access to. All communication from Franciscan University will be directed to the email you use for your personal account.*

## Sharing workshops with your Parents or Students

**FRANCISCAN AT HOME** is designed to form those who form others. Our subscription includes free access for an unlimited number of parish staff and volunteers **as well as** any other people, Catholic or non-Catholic, who reside in our diocese. If you find a workshop or segment useful for your parents or students, they can create their own free account. As an example, many relevant workshops can be found in the *Ministry of Parenting (MP) Track*, under *Lay Vocation, Spousal Vocation or Parenting*.

# FRANCISCAN AT HOME

Online learning at your convenience

Now open to anyone residing in the Diocese of Nelson

**To create your personal account on the diocesan subscription ...**

**Step 1 – go to [www.franciscanathome.com](http://www.franciscanathome.com)**



**Step 2 – click on Partnering Dioceses at the top right of the web page, and use the dropdown list to select Diocese of Nelson, British Columbia**



**Step 3 – on the Nelson Diocese landing page, select the middle blue box which says "My parish or school is already registered ..." to create your free individual account**



**Step 4 – on the log in page, select the option to "create a new account"**



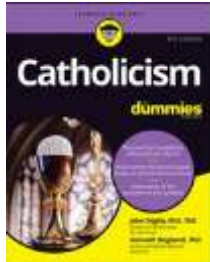
**Step 5 – fill in any required personal information and Save**

A screenshot of the account creation form. The form has a grey header with the text "Account". Below the header, there are several input fields: "Full name \*", "Current password", and "Email address \*". The "Full name" field contains the text "Demo Account". Below the "Current password" field, there is a link that says "Enter your current password to change the E-mail address or Password. Request new password."

**Step 6 – finally, use the dropdown boxes to select your country, diocese, and local church (institution) to attach your account to an active subscription!**

Sign Up for Free through Your Institution

A screenshot of the sign up page. The page has a green header with the text "Sign Up for Free through Your Institution". Below the header, there is a green box with the text "Further instructions have been sent to your email address.". Below that, there are two dropdown boxes: "Diocese and Institution" and "Country \*". The "Country" dropdown is highlighted with a red circle and contains the text "United States".



## The Twelve Articles of Catholic Faith

adapted from Catholicism for Dummies, 4th Edition  
By Rev. John Trigilio Jr. and Rev. Kenneth Brighenti

If you want to know the basics of the Catholic faith, look no further than the articles of Catholic faith. This list of twelve articles mirrors the Apostles' Creed, a prayer that sets out Catholic tenets:

**Article 1: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.** This affirms that God exists, that he's a Triune God (one God in three persons, known as the Holy Trinity), and that he created the known universe.

**Article 2: And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.** This attests that Jesus is the Son of God and that he's most certainly divine. The word *Lord* implies divinity, because the Greek *Kyrios* and the Hebrew *Adonai* both mean "lord" and are ascribed only to God. So the use of *Lord* with *Jesus* is meant to profess his divinity. The name *Jesus* comes from the Hebrew *Jeshua*, meaning "God saves." So we believe that Jesus is Savior.

**Article 3: Who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.** This affirms the human nature of Christ, meaning he had a real, true human mother, and also affirms his divine nature, meaning he had no human father but by the power of the Holy Spirit was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He's therefore considered both God and man by Christians—fully divine and fully human.

**Article 4: He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.** The human nature of Christ could feel pain and actually die, and he did on Good Friday. The mention of Pontius Pilate by name wasn't meant so much to vilify him forever in history but to place the Crucifixion within human history.

Reference is made to an actual historical person, the Roman governor of Judea, appointed by Caesar, to put the life and death of Jesus within a chronological and historical context. It also reminds the faithful that one can't blame all Jews for the death of Jesus, as some have erroneously done over the ages. Certain Jewish leaders conspired against Jesus, but the actual death sentence was given by a Roman and carried out by Roman soldiers. So both Jew and Gentile alike shared in the spilling of innocent blood. Anti-Semitism based on the Crucifixion of Jesus is inaccurate, unjust, and erroneous.

**Article 5: He descended into hell. The third day he arose again from the dead.** The hell Jesus descended into wasn't the hell of the damned, where Jews and Christians believe the devil and his demons reside. *Hell* was merely a word that Jews and early Christians used to describe the place of the dead. This passage affirms that on the third day he rose, meaning Jesus came back from the dead of his own divine power. He wasn't just clinically dead for a few minutes; he was dead dead — then he rose from the dead. More than a resuscitated corpse, Jesus possessed a glorified and risen body.

**Article 6: He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.**

The Ascension reminds the faithful that after the human and divine natures of Christ were united in the Incarnation, they could never be separated. In other words, after the saving death and Resurrection, Jesus didn't dump his human body as if he didn't need it anymore. His human body will exist forever. Where Jesus went, body and soul, into heaven, the faithful hope one day to follow.

**Article 7: He will come again to judge the living and the dead.** This article affirms the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world to be its judge. Judgment Day, Day of Reckoning, Doomsday—they're all metaphors for the end of time when what's known as the General Judgment will occur. We believe that after the death of any human person, immediate private judgment occurs and the person goes directly to heaven, hell, or purgatory (an intermediate place in preparation for heaven).

**Article 8: I believe in the Holy Spirit,** This part reminds us that God exists in three persons — the Holy Trinity — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. What's referred to as the Force in the movie *Star Wars* isn't the same as the Holy Spirit, who is a distinct person equal to the other two — God the Father and God the Son.

**Article 9: the holy catholic Church, the Communion of Saints,** We believe that the Church is more than a mere institution and certainly not a necessary evil. It's an essential dimension and aspect of spiritual life. Christ explicitly uses the word *church* (*ekklesia* in Greek) in Matthew 16 when he says, "I will build My Church."

**Article 10: the forgiveness of sins,** Christ came to save the world from sin. Belief in the forgiveness of sins is essential to Christianity. Sins are forgiven in Baptism and in the Sacrament of Penance (aka Reconciliation or Confession).

**Article 11: the resurrection of the body,** A human being is a union of body and soul, so death is just the momentary separation of body and soul until the end of the world, the Second Coming of Christ, the General Judgment, and the resurrection of the dead. The just go, body and soul, into heaven, and the damned go, body and soul, into hell.

**Article 12: And in life everlasting.** As Christ Our Savior died, so, too, must mere mortals. As he rose, so shall all human beings. Death is the only way to cross from this life into the next. At the very moment of death, private judgment occurs; Christ judges the soul:

- If it's particularly holy and virtuous, the soul goes directly to heaven.
- If it's evil and wicked and dies in mortal sin, it's damned for eternity in hell.
- If a person lived a life not bad enough to warrant hell but not holy enough to go right to heaven, Catholics believe the soul goes to purgatory, which is a middle ground between heaven and earth, a state where departed souls want to go to be cleansed of any attachments to sin before going through the pearly gates

*Note: For a more comprehensive explanation of the Creed, see **Appendix – The Ultimate Cheat Sheet**, in the **Cornerstone Guide for Parish Catechists**.*



# Parish Catechist Quick Start

## Supplementary Resources

## Appendix 1 – The #1 Obstacle to Kids Encountering Christ



### **The #1 obstacle to kids encountering Christ**

Good morning,

I make no secret of the purpose of [The Religion Teacher](#). Our vision is:

*Every Day, Every Child, an Encounter with Christ*

When children have real encounters with Christ, they enter into real and long-lasting relationships with him. So we ask ourselves: what stands in the way of this encounter with Christ this year?

#### **Is COVID the biggest obstacle to kids encountering Christ?**

COVID has caused so many disruptions to religious education and this year doesn't look to be the smooth sailing we hoped. Keeping our kids and their families healthy and safe is a top priority, but with all the distractions and precautions, can our kids encounter Christ?

Last year wasn't perfect, but our students still received the sacraments. They still learned to pray. They still learned to love the Lord. They still encountered Christ in your care.

However. . . After a year of watching mass on TV, many of the families in our parishes are starting to ask themselves: what's the point?

What's the point of coming back to church in person?  
What's the point of even watching church online?

As these questions arise, they reveal a bigger problem than a pandemic. Even after the pandemic subsides, these questions won't go away. The biggest obstacle goes deeper than the coronavirus.

#### **Are parents the #1 obstacle to kids encountering Christ ?**

It is easy to feel that our work isn't getting supported at home. We work hard, but there is often a disconnect with the way the faith is practiced outside of class. Our kids may have an encounter with Christ in class, but are they getting that same opportunity at home?

Can I confess something?

My favorite part about teaching second grade isn't seeing the kids have encounters with Christ in the Eucharist.

Don't get me wrong. They get to experience the sacraments for the first time. It's amazing. I tear up often when I get to see them at Mass. But what really gets to me is the parents. Seeing the parents reignite their faith is incredible. SO many of them go to confession for the first time since their first confession! They find a new love for the Lord in the Eucharist -- not all of them, of course, but many find a new home in the Church.

When parents are participants, they encounter Christ, too.

What you do in class can spill over into the home. When a kid begins a journey of love with Christ, they will bring their parents along for the ride.

So, what is it?

Why aren't parents bringing kids to mass and the other sacraments?  
Why aren't they reading the Bible at home or sharing stories about the lives of the saints?  
Why are so few of them praying as a family on a consistent basis?

There is a deeper challenge we need to overcome.

### **The #1 Obstacle Is . . .**

I was listening to a podcast while on a run this summer and I nearly stumbled when I heard the host say something that hurt my heart.

I won't give the name of the podcast or the host, but he is a very devout Christian. He recently had a profound conversion experience and strives to combine his gifts for motivation and entrepreneurship with his love of God. But something he said on that particular episode really hit me. I'll paraphrase:

*"You don't need religion. You just need a strong relationship with God."*

The sad thing was, his argument against religion made a lot of sense and I'm the guy with a website called The RELIGION Teacher!

The truth is, what you and I might see as the greatest obstacle to an encounter with Christ is different than what our students and their parents might think.

If you asked people who grew up going to Catholic schools or parish religious education programs about why they drifted away, the answers are going to be pretty similar. Many people believe religion (yes, religion!) didn't help them form a relationship with God, or worse, pushed them away.

According to kids and parents, the greatest obstacle to encountering Christ . . . the greatest obstacle to a relationship with God is . . . **religion**.

How do we know people don't like religion?

Kids are just going through the motions at Mass.

Kids can recite rote prayers in class, but seldom pray them at home.

Kids (especially as teenagers) question tough teachings and grow to dislike the Church because of them.

Many families only come to church on Christmas and Easter.

### **Religious Education and the Love of Religion**

But as religious educators we love religion!

Religion allows us to have an encounter with Christ. Religion leads us into and sustains our relationship with Christ. Scripture is our source of hope. Sacraments are an experience of the love of God. The Church's prayers are powerful. The Church's doctrines help us understand more about the God who loves us.

So why is there such a disconnect?

We are in a crisis right now. People do not find religion relatable anymore. Worse yet, they would rather try to cultivate a relationship with God on their own without religion. According to a [Gallup poll](#) from just a few months ago, less than half the people in the United States (47%) belong to a church, synagogue, or mosque.

The question is: what do we do with that 47% that belong to our parish or attend our school? How do we make an impact on the kids in our schools and ministries?

Let's ask ourselves: How can we transform religion from an obstacle to encountering Christ to the **best** way to encounter Christ in the minds of the families we serve?

How can we help our students and their parents have a relationship with God **because** of religion not despite it?

We are, after all, religion teachers and religious educators. This is our job.

**What is your #1 goal this year?**

**Is there a certain part of our religion that you would like to your students to appreciate the most? Scripture? Sacraments? Saints? Social Justice? Morality?**

## Write down your goal.

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Here are some of the goals I received by email:

- "My goal is to make their first Holy communion unforgettable and an intimate encounter with Jesus."
- "My priority this year is to stoke a fire in my students to strive for sainthood and to uphold their dignity as well as the dignity of others."
- "My goal this year is to help lead my second graders to encounter Jesus in a life changing way."
- "I think my goal this year is to help students develop a relationship with God and Mother Mary! I would love for them to see how our faith is a beautiful way to bridge the gap."
- "I want my students to connect their faith to their lives. I want them to see religion as their lifestyle, not just a class they take every day in school."
- "I want them to understand that sacraments are the highway to heaven."
- "For them to learn something new each week that can refer to their messy lives."
- "Have a spiritual renewal in myself. Without that, everything is hollow."
- **And this metaphor says it all:** "I am overwhelmed trying to make religion more like cherry coke at our school and less like the cherry on top. I want it to be inside everything we teach."

I am very excited for you to achieve these and all your goals this year. We can get there together, but we have to be careful. We can easily fall into a few traps that lead our students away from religion and then away from a relationship with God.

## Religious Education Traps

I've been in religious education for seventeen years. Many of the students I've taught have grown up and become a part of that group of non-religious millennials. I'm writing this hoping to spark some motivation to avoid the same mistakes I've made.

One thing I have seen in my years working in religious education and studying the history of catechesis is that there tends to be a large pendulum swing from generation to generation.

Imagine catechesis on a line from "Fluff" on one end and "Fundamentalism" on the other. Both extremes lead people away from religion.

By fluff I mean avoiding difficult teachings or religious practices and focusing only on someone's feelings. Jesus, of course, was not afraid of hurting his disciples' feelings with difficult teachings and we shouldn't be afraid either.

By fundamentalism I mean extreme and unmerciful defense of the truths of our faith without concern for anyone's need for help and healing. Jesus warned against this approach in his criticism of the scribes and Pharisees.

**Fluff** = Emotion without Education

**Fundamentalism** = Education without Emotion

Teach with fluff and people won't take religion seriously.

Teach with fundamentalism and people will reject religion as narrow-minded.

Reading this you might think, "No, I would never do that!"

Here are some ways we (I) can slide too far in both directions preventing students from forming a relationship with God through religion.

### **Trap #1: Time**

I don't know about you, but I always feel like I'm in a hurry during class. With so much to teach and so little time, I revert into a few bad habits:

- I lecture for too long.
- I give quick answers to profound questions.
- I treat prayer as a small item on the lesson checklist.

I want to expand on that last point about prayer. The pressures of time have often led me to put limits on prayer time. I've made the mistake of thinking prayer is just "fluff" time and that I should focus more time on the teachings.

Teaching our students Catholic prayers is important. We have so many incredible devotions that could make a big impact on the lives of our students.

If they could just bring those prayers home with them and try them in everyday life, right?

When I first started out in teaching, I would go through the list of Catholic prayers and devotions in the back of the textbook and plan to introduce a new prayer each class. It seemed like a good plan. We started the class with a prayer and I had the kids read from the prayers in the back of the book. Everyone was prayerful. We read some great prayers, too. But I was more concerned with finishing quickly so we could start the "real" lesson of the day.

Do you see the mistake there?

I was treating prayer as something we had to check off like a chore.  
I was making religion a meaningless obligation.  
I was educating without emotion.

Prayer wasn't something personal. It was just something they were supposed to learn.

What I should have done instead (and what I do now) is integrate prayer into every lesson. Instead of making the practice of religion a short experience at the beginning of the class, I make it an essential part of the catechetical learning process. I'll expand more on this later, but first let's look at the other traps.

### **Trap #2: Trivia**

I love trivia. Do you ever have trivia nights at your church?

I'm terrible with the pop culture categories, but when it comes to history, sports, or religion, I am your man. Especially religion. As a religion teacher, I would be embarrassed if my team missed any of the Catholic trivia questions!

I didn't realize it, but in my early years as a teacher I was unintentionally focused on training kids in Catholic trivia. I made religious education all about the Catholic teachings and not about Catholic experience.

As I read through the goals you sent to me, it gives me hope. If you looked at the way many religious educators teach, however, you would think the goal was to win at Catholic trivia nights. The experience of religion can so easily be disconnected with the education about religion. We educate without emotion.

Should we avoid the teachings? Of course not! But we have to make sure our kids see the connection between what they learn and how to live.

### **Trap #3: Textbooks**

Possibly the best example of teaching to the extremes of fluff and fundamentalism at the same time is in the way we use our textbooks.

Look closely and you can see the pendulum swing between fluff and fundamentalism in the development of textbooks in the last half-century.

There was a time in which Catholic textbooks included a lot of fluff and very little teachings. After the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the institution of the bishops' approval process for textbooks, however, our textbooks include sound teachings with most of the prayer and pedagogy inserted into the teacher's manuals.

I'm not knocking textbooks. I could not teach without a textbook. I rely on them heavily each year. The teachings in each chapter give me the foundation of what I want my students to learn each lesson.

But textbooks are not great at helping us know how to teach.

Reading a textbook in class, for example, is a poor use of time. The books offer a definitive content to teach, but they should not be the primary teaching tool. "Read & discuss" is not a great way to teach. It makes religion boring.

If religion is boring for kids now, it will continue to be boring later in life and that's when we lose them.

So, like you I often go out searching online for solid resources to use in class. That's where keeping that balance at the center of fluff and fundamentalism gets tricky.

It's easy to find and download fluff: the crafts, videos, and games that are fun but lack truths of our faith. It's also easy to find fundamentalism: long, detailed teachings about certain topics without a clear and easy way to explain it all to young people.

We have to find better activities to integrate the content of the textbook into the context of their lives.

We want them to learn, but also live their faith.

## **What Do We Do?**

There is a way to avoid the extremes of fluff and fundamentalism.  
There is a way to balance our religion and our relationship with God.  
It will help you find the resources to lead people into an encounter with Christ.

But it starts with the commitment to avoid these bad habits that lead us away from our goals.

**Look at the goals you wrote down for the year.**

**Think of one way you have experienced that goal in your personal life and faith formation.**

For example, let's say my goal for my students at the end of this year is for them to "love attending Mass." I will think about the times I loved attending Mass: I will remember masses with people I love at weddings and funerals. I will remember masses during retreats and youth conferences. I will remember the quiet moment of prayer I got to experience just last weekend before mass.

1. Write down a goal for your students.

2. Write one way you experienced this goal yourself.

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In today's world, people would rather seek a relationship with God outside of religion. *How do we make religion relatable?* How do we help students find a relationship with God through religion?

If we focus on fluff, we make religion about emotion without an education.

If we focus on fundamentalism, we make religion about the education without emotion.

We have to balance the education and emotion and avoid the three traps of fluff and fundamentalism:

1. **Time:** We spend all our time on religion, but no time on relationship.
2. **Trivia:** Students memorize religion facts without a focus on their relationship with God.
3. **Textbooks:** We rely too heavily on textbooks and make religion boring for kids.

**What do we do instead?**

Try this thought experiment with me: *What if we only had five minutes with our class?*

That's right. Five minutes! What would you do?

In even that short amount of time, we would want our students to:

1. **Learn** something new.
2. Feel the **love** of God.
3. **Live** what they learned.

The best way I know to help kids learn, love, and live their faith is a process I call [Lectio Divina Lesson Planning](#). You can read about it [here](#).

Essentially, Lectio Divina Lesson Planning is applying Lectio Divina to everything we teach, not just reading the Bible.

But if we only had five minutes, we would need to simplify the process even further.

Try this:

Here is a three-step process to follow for every lesson we teach no matter how much or little time we have:

1. Read
2. Reflect
3. Respond

These three steps lead our students into an encounter with Christ.

1. Read to learn about Christ. (Learn)
2. Reflect to love Christ. (Meditate)
3. Respond to live with Christ. (Pray, Contemplate, Act)

Read, Reflect, and Respond in every class to make religion more relatable. These three steps will combine education and emotion into an encounter with Christ.

### **Step 1: Read to Learn**

When I say "read" I don't actually mean read the textbook in class. "Reading" is a helpful metaphor for a number of different ways students can receive new information.

Present new ideas in class:

- Read very short excerpts from the textbook, Catechism, Bible, books, saint stories, worksheets, etc.
- Lecture, but stick to just three main points.
- Watch a short video.
- Listen to an audio recording.

Then students will need to practice remembering what they read:

- Recall with question and answer
- Summarize
- Paraphrase
- Compare and Contrast
- Make connections
- etc.

For example, in a lesson on the Parable of the Prodigal Son, you could:

1. Read the parable.
2. Watch a video explanation about the parable.
3. Have students perform the parable as a skit.
4. Have students summarize the parable in creative ways.

But we cannot stop there. As religious educators, we have to go beyond the education. In the next step we make religion about the relationship with God.

### **Step 2: Reflect to Love**

The kinds of questions we ask are important. In religious education, we focus on meaning in two ways:

1. What does this teaching mean? and
2. What does this teaching mean **to me**?

In Lectio Divina we move from reading Scripture to meditating on the message God has for us through that reading. We personalize what we read. We prayerfully look for ways to experience God's love through his Word. In that same lesson on the Parable of the Prodigal Son above, students would reflect on how they have been like the prodigal son (or the loyal son) in the story.

Reflecting is remembering.

Students would need to remember times in which they have been like the sons in the story. Without this crucial step, we train our kids to memorize without meaning. Personal reflection is absolutely essential to what we do.

We have to lead students to focus on their relationship with God every single day we see them.

### **Step 3: Respond to Live**

In step one our students learned something new about God.  
In step two our students reflected on God's love for them.

Now students must live what they have learned in their everyday lives. We must give them ways to respond to God's love in meaningful ways. We respond to God's love with prayer and action.

I mentioned earlier how I used to start each class introducing a new Catholic prayer practice or devotion. What I'm suggesting instead is to integrate those prayer practices into a meaningful part of every lesson.

This makes prayer a response to God's love, not just a task to complete.

In a lesson on the Prodigal Son, students would respond to the merciful love of the Father by praying the Act of Contrition or echoing the words of the Prodigal Son himself. By praying the [Act of Contrition prayer](#) in class right after they reflect on the experience of contrition in the parable of the Prodigal Son, students are given a reason to pray the prayer again.

Or we might challenge them to pray for someone in need of our mercy. We might encourage the kids to forgive a prodigal son in their lives and even express that forgiveness outside of class.

([Here is a full lesson plan on the Parable of the Prodigal Son](#) following the Lectio Divina Lesson Planning process.)

All this is to say, we should make sure every lesson we teach does three things:

1. Read
2. Reflect
3. Respond

Follow these three steps and you will lead your kids into a relationship with God through religion. Let me share a few more examples of these three steps at work.

### **Read, Reflect, and Respond Lessons**

#### **A Mini-Lesson on Baptism**

1. **Read:** [Watch this video about Baptism](#) and have students explain what baptism washes away and why we are immersed into water.
2. **Reflect:** Have students write a sin on a scrap sheet of paper with a pencil. Carry around a bowl of water and have the kids crumble up the paper and throw it into the water to be washed away.
3. **Respond:** Lead students to renew their baptismal vows.

#### **A Mini-Lesson on the Ten Commandments**

1. **Read:** Read the Ten Commandments as a class clarifying any difficult to understand words. [Give them this worksheet](#) to practice remembering each commandment.
2. **Reflect:** Have students pick one commandment they live well and one they need to work on.
3. **Respond:** [Pray this Ten Commandments prayer](#) asking for God's help.

#### **A Mini-Lesson on the Common Good (a Catholic Social Teaching)**

1. **Read:** [Watch this video explanation of the Common Good](#). Ask the students: "True or False? The common good is to work toward the greater good for the greatest number of people." (False)

2. **Reflect:** Have students list three ways they can live out the Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Mt 7:12). Then have them list three stories when they lived the Golden Rule.
3. **Respond:** Lead the students in praying for those suffering from poverty, hunger, and discrimination.

**Using Read, Reflect, and Respond, revisit a prior lesson plan. Does it include each of the three? If not, how could it be modified:**

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I will be sharing more detailed examples of the Read, Reflect, and Respond process at work. I will post a new mini-lesson every day next week, Monday through Friday. (In fact, if you have any lesson requests, don't hesitate to send them my way. But check to make sure I don't already have a lesson available at [The Religion Teacher](#)).

In the meantime, look for the regularly scheduled Sunday email with lesson ideas for next week. I'm excited for this new year and for the opportunity to work together to lead our students into a relationship with God through and not despite religion!

Go make disciples!

God bless,

Jared

Note from the Nelson Diocese Office of Faith Formation – while some resources on the TRT website are by paid subscription, many, many are freely available. If you enjoyed this article, we recommend subscribing to TRT's Sunday Email, and checking out the TRT Guide posted on the diocesan **Coordinator** page under **Lesson Planning**.

Adapted for Nelson Diocese from source accessed at:

<https://mailchi.mp/thereligionteacher/v3yr1agg7d-1759325> (September 19, 2021)

## Appendix 2 – Excerpts from *The Bible Blueprint* by Joe Paprocki

Take the Quiz – What’s your BQ? (Bible Quotient), pages 14-15



### Quiz

Determine your level of bibliophobic behavior by using the scale below to respond to each of the symptoms in this checklist.

**0** = Totally Disagree                      **2** = Somewhat Agree  
**1** = Somewhat Disagree                  **3** = Totally Agree

- \_\_\_\_\_ You have trouble locating even famous Bible stories and characters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You shy away from discussions about the Bible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You feel intimidated by those who you feel have more Bible knowledge than yourself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You have difficulty answering questions that children ask you about the Bible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You rarely attempt reading the Bible on your own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You feel inadequate when you consider attending Bible study.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Locating a passage identified by book, chapter, and verse (e.g., 1 Pt 2:3) seems as difficult as solving an algebra problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ After reading a Bible passage, you often feel you have no idea what it meant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You find many Bible stories confusing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your Bible is still in store-bought “mint” condition. (Give yourself an extra point if it is still encased in the store’s shrink-wrap.)
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Write your total here.**



**Now, match your score to one of these categories.**

- 0 = None:** You’re perfectly at home with the Bible.
- 1-10 = Mild:** The Bible presents some challenges to you.
- 11-20 = Moderate:** You find the Bible to be most difficult.
- 21-29 = Severe:** You have a strong fear of the Bible.
- 30-31 = Bibliophobe Alert:** You need immediate Bible therapy!

## Acknowledging the Problem

Our lack of knowledge about the Bible can often be an embarrassment. How can we, adult Catholic Christians, admit to not knowing or understanding the Word of God? We may not even realize how inadequate our understanding of the Bible really is until we are put to the test.

Did someone suggest a test? Take the following quiz to see just how familiar (or unfamiliar) you are with the Bible and its contents.

### Quiz



Time yourself as you find each of these stories or passages in the Bible. Write down how long it takes you to find each one. If you are able to find a story or passage in two minutes or fewer, place a check mark next to it.

- \_\_\_\_\_ David and Goliath
- \_\_\_\_\_ Noah's ark
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jonah and the large fish
- \_\_\_\_\_ Moses crossing the Red Sea
- \_\_\_\_\_ Daniel in the lion's den
- \_\_\_\_\_ Zacchaeus the tax collector
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus walking on the water
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pentecost
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hg 2:1-3
- \_\_\_\_\_ The second book of Chronicles, chapter 29, verses 9-15



**Now, match the number of check marks to one of the categories below to determine your BQ (Bible Quotient).**

- 10 = **High:** You probably don't need to read the rest of *The Bible Blueprint*.
- 7-9 = **Average:** Not bad, but keep reading.
- 3-6 = **Fair:** *The Bible Blueprint* is required reading.
- 0-2 = **Low:** You need *The Bible Blueprint*.

## Chapter 1 - Discovering the Bible Blueprint, pages 2–7

God, indeed, is an architect with a plan:

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

God's plan for us is no secret. He has provided us with a blueprint for our salvation: the Paschal Mystery—the suffering, death, and resurrection—of Jesus Christ. And where do we find this blueprint laid out for us? In the Bible.

So, just what is the Bible and how is it a blueprint for our salvation? Let's explore.

### Jesus the Architect?

When the Bible refers to Jesus as a *carpenter* (Mark 6:3) and as the *carpenter's son* (Matthew 13:55), it uses the Greek word *tekton* which suggests not only a worker in wood but a builder. It should come to us as no surprise then, that Jesus uses the imagery of *building* quite freely in the Gospels:

- On this rock I will build my church . . . (Mt 16:18)
- The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone . . . (Mt 21:42)
- I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days. (Mt 26:61)
- That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply, and laid the foundation upon rock . . . (Lk 6:48)
- I will pull down my barns and build larger ones . . . (Lk 12:18)
- For which of you, intending to build a tower . . . (Lk 14:28)

### The Bible Blueprint

While it is great to know that the Bible is a blueprint for our salvation, it is also helpful to know how to read blueprints. I recall years ago, when my dad was making plans to open a new family pharmacy to replace the old one that was being demolished, he had a set of blueprints drawn up for the new store. Although I couldn't make heads or tails of them, I was amazed at how various construction workers and electricians were able to

glance at those blueprints and know exactly where to install a new store fixture or an electrical outlet. In a similar way, we need to be able to read God’s blueprint for salvation as revealed in the Bible. The nice thing is, the Bible itself has a blueprint of sorts: a plan for its own arrangement. Here’s what it looks like:

Old Testament	<i>Catalog</i>	New Testament
Pentateuch (Torah)	<i>Table of Contents</i>	Gospels
History		Acts
Wisdom		Letters
Prophets		Revelation

In fact, I find it helpful to carry this image of a blueprint even further and to think of the Bible as a building—a library, actually. I call it God’s Library. If the Bible were indeed a building, then the above blueprint reveals to us how it is arranged. In short, we find the following:

- God’s Library has two wings: an Old Testament wing and a New Testament wing.
- Both wings of the building are divided into four smaller stack rooms.
- In the Old Testament wing, which is more than twice the size of the New Testament wing, we can find rooms dedicated to the Pentateuch, History, Wisdom, and the Prophets.
- In the New Testament wing, we can find rooms housing the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, the Letters, and Revelation.
- There is also a foyer or front desk housing the card catalog or Table of Contents.

**The Bible is truly a library  
—a collection of books.**



Of course, no such building exists. However, the Bible is truly a library—a collection of books. This metaphor can help us understand how to approach the Bible and, like an architect or construction worker, be capable of reading the blueprints and understanding how it will lead us to encounter God.

## The Bible: What Is It?

Some years ago, Pepsi ran a television commercial that took place in a futuristic setting with a professor leading a group of students on an

archeological dig. As they all drink from their Pepsi cans, one of them unearths a find; an object caked over with centuries of mud and dirt. Unable to make out what the object is, the professor places it in a device that quickly removes all of the layers of dirt, only to reveal an empty bottle of Coca-Cola. With puzzled expressions, the students look at the object and ask the professor, “What is it?” The professor, with

the same puzzled expression, tilts the bottle this way and that before responding, “I have no idea!”—a clever poke at Coca-Cola.

When we encounter the Bible, the very first question we should ask is, “What is it?” and we need to come away with a much better answer than, “I have no idea.” So, just what is the Bible?


First, when it comes to describing what the Bible is, I would like to lay to rest a cute acronym

**B**-asic  
**I**-nstruction  
**B**-efore  
**L**-eaving  
**E**-arth

Now, I know this acronym is likeable and there’s nothing erroneous about it, but it does a disservice to the Bible. Yes, the Bible contains instruction; however, the Bible is much more than an instruction manual. Instruction manuals don’t bring readers into intimate relationship with the books’ authors. The Bible does. We receive far more than instruction from the Bible: we receive an invitation to an intimate relationship with the Creator of the universe.

Even better than an acronym for the Bible is one word that summarizes what the Bible is: *revelation*.

Now, I know that at first glance that word sounds deeply theological. It is not. The root word of revelation is, of course, the word *reveal*. Revelation



**We receive far more than instruction from the Bible: we receive an invitation to an intimate relationship with the Creator of the universe.**

occurs when someone or something is revealed. We humans know that revealing ourselves to others is the key to any relationship. When we meet someone for the first time, we exchange basic information about where we live, what we do for a living, who we live with, where we grew up, where we went to school, and so on. Why? To establish a relationship. The deeper we want the relationship to go, the more we reveal. If we don't want the relationship to go any further, we continue to talk about the weather.

So, the Bible is basically the record of God's revelation of himself to us. Why would God do this? To enter into a relationship with us. The Bible is an invitation to intimacy with God. If the Bible were solely an instruction manual, we could read it and still not know God. In reality, the Bible is

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**"Fight truth decay—  
study the Bible daily!"**

—C. S. LEWIS

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one of the most crucial ways that we come to know God. Remember that for the Jewish people, the verb *to know* suggested intimacy (for example, Mary responding to the angel's announcement of her pregnancy by asking, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" [Luke 1:34, NKJV]). By reading the Bible, we enter into a more intimate relationship with God who reveals himself to us throughout salvation history, culminating in the Incarnation of Jesus—the Word made flesh.

We don't read the Bible to find answers. We don't study the Bible in order to be able to debate others about its meaning. When all is said and done, we *pray* the Bible so that we may encounter the living God who is revealing himself to us from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

### **A New Acronym?**

Perhaps a better acronym for B.I.B.L.E. would be the following:

**B**-lessed

**I**-ntimacy

**B**-egets

**L**-ife

**E**-verlasting

**It is through an intimate relationship  
with the God of love that we find  
everlasting life!**

## Scripture and Tradition

The Word of God takes the form of both the written word (Scripture) and of a living Tradition. For Catholics, Scripture and Tradition are inseparable, forming one “sacred deposit of the Word of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 97). Some people like to think that the Bible is the final word on all matters. There’s only one problem with that. The Bible, as we know it today, is the product of Tradition. In other words, an oral tradition of preaching the Gospel existed before the New Testament was written down. Likewise, the final arrangement of the books of the Bible as we have it today was set in place by the leaders of the early Church. The Bible, which flows from Church Tradition, is part of a single source of God’s revelation. It is the revealed Word of God.

## Blueprints and Libraries: Why Use Metaphors?

Not all people need metaphors to grow in their understanding of the Bible. However, in my experience as a teacher, I have found that people, young and old, tend to learn more effectively when metaphors are employed in the process. Personally, I developed this blueprint/library metaphor almost thirty years ago when teaching high school religion in Chicago. I discovered early on that my freshman students were fairly clueless when it came to the Bible. Although the designated topic for freshmen was the sacraments, I asked my chairman if I could set aside one week to do a crash course on the Bible, which he agreed to.

I realized that the Bible as a whole was just too huge and that the students needed it to be broken down into bite-size pieces. Lo and behold, the arrangement of the Bible itself provided me with the clue I needed to help my students. Noticing that the table of contents for most Bibles arranged the Old Testament according to the categories of Pentateuch, History, Wisdom, and Prophets, and the New Testament according to Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Letters, and Revelation, the image of a blueprint for a library building quickly entered my mind.

I immediately set out to work and created a cardboard model of a library building and called it God’s Library. The building reflected the blueprint pictured earlier in this chapter. Next, I created bookmarks for the students—one for each of the eight sections of the Bible. Each

bookmark included a brief overview of a particular section of the Bible along with a bulleted list of highlights to be found in each section. Using these bookmarks, I embarked on a crash course with my students designed to dramatically increase their knowledge of the Bible. At the end of the week, I invited my department chair to come to my class and invited him to call out the name of any famous Bible character, guaranteeing that the majority of my students would find a passage related to that character in under a minute. Thankfully, they were able to do so, and I kept my job!

### **“I Don’t Know Anything about the Bible!”**

It was not long thereafter that a DRE friend of mine invited me to come to her parish to do a shortened version of this activity with her sixth-grade religious education students. Over the next few years, I did dozens of these Bible workshops for students in religious education programs. I soon began to notice a pattern. At each event, the catechists who were present would come up

to me afterward and tell me how much they enjoyed it, how much they thought it would help the kids, and how much they learned themselves. They would often say, “I don’t know anything about the Bible . . . this really helped me.” More and more I realized that adult Catholics were hungry for greater

knowledge of the Bible. I began doing the presentations for groups of adults and eventually wrote the book *God’s Library* to address this need in the Church. Now, some thirty years after this concept evolved out of a high school religion class, I offer you this basic introduction to the Bible—*The Bible Blueprint: A Catholic’s Guide to Understanding and Embracing God’s Word*. I hope you enjoy it and come to know our Lord more deeply through his Sacred Word in Scripture.



## Chapter Three

# Preparing to Enter God’s Library



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It's common to use the word *blueprint* when referring to any kind of a plan. We speak of a blueprint for success, a blueprint for the nation's economy, and a blueprint for world peace. Basically, we use the word *blueprint* to describe the existence of a plan. As we approach the Bible, it's good to know that there is a plan to how the Bible is put together. The Bible—God's library—has a blueprint that, if followed, can make it easy for you and me to "walk through it" without getting lost.

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Over the years, countless people resolve—whether at New Year's or some other time—to read the Bible cover to cover. Perhaps you will as well. My guess is that your experience will go something like this.

You begin with a great deal of enthusiasm, perhaps parcelling out a special time each day to devote to reading the Bible.

Genesis has enough interesting stories to keep you going but gives rather too much practical advice on ark building.

Most of Exodus is full of drama, with the ten plagues and the Red Sea, and rebuilds the enthusiasm that began to flag in the genealogy sections of Genesis.

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This sacred tradition, therefore, and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face (see 1 John 3:2).  
(*Dei Verbum*, 7)

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Leviticus is often the deal breaker. Laws, rules, directions, and penalties—ugh! And if you somehow manage to make it through Leviticus, Numbers is almost guaranteed to finish you off.

You give up on your reading project, concluding that the Bible is a book written for scholars and not for ordinary folks like us.

Why do I make this dire prediction? Simply because reading the Bible from cover to cover is a flawed approach that treats the Bible like an ordinary book. Even such humongous tomes as *War and Peace* can be conquered using this basic head-down, barrel-through method of reading cover to cover. However, the Bible is no ordinary book. It is a collection of books, a library. Sure, the Bible *can* be read from cover to cover, and many have done so with great delight. However, many others have tried and failed, only to miss out on the powerful message of God's Word. We need to approach the Bible as if we were exploring the blueprints of a library building. Like any library, the Bible is divided into a number of sections, making available to us a rich variety of readings from which we may choose according to our needs and tastes. Consider the Bible a library that you will become more familiar with over time. A quick study of the blueprints for God's library will help you to become more familiar with how the Bible is arranged. The more familiar you become with God's Library, the more you will use it. The more you use it, the more of it you will read and understand. The more of it you read and understand, the closer you will be to the God who speaks to you in and through it.



\*The Reading through the Bible Hour\* began to run into ratings problems in Exodus 36.

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## How a Library Works

Let's flesh out this comparison between the Bible and a library by thinking about how we use our local libraries and how we might "use" the Bible. Over the course of our lives, most of us have made numerous trips to libraries in our schools and communities. We go for various reasons: research, enrichment, entertainment, to find peace and quiet, etc. But once we're there, how do we use a library? It's easy. For most of us, it entails the following:


- check the online card catalog for the location of a particular author or book title or a type of subject matter, or ask a librarian to point out the location of a particular type of literature
- locate the section of the library in which that type of literature (or in which the book's assigned number) can be found
- locate the item(s) you are interested in reading
- check out the item(s)
- take the item(s) home and read at your leisure or as needed

Libraries are familiar, often comforting, places. Unless you were shushed one too many times as a child, we tend not to associate anxiety with visiting the library. So, with that in mind, let's visit God's Library. We come to God's Library for many reasons: research, prayer, inspiration, curiosity, enjoyment, encouragement, etc. We also come to it with different tastes. Some of us prefer the psalms and the proverbs to the letters and the parables.

Let's take a closer look now at the various parts of God's library.

## Using the Catalog

Nowadays, nearly all library card catalogs are computerized. However, the basic idea has not changed. You can still locate a book using the author's name or the book's title, or you can use a keyword search to find books on a particular subject (more on this later). Many of us, when looking for a particular book, are guilty of ignoring the catalog at the library and



**Consider the Bible a library that you will become more familiar with over time. The more familiar you become with God's Library, the more you will use it.**

heading straight for the shelves. More often than not, we end up searching aisle after aisle and shelf after shelf with little or no luck. In much the same way, many of us attempt to locate particular Scripture passages in the Bible without using the “catalog,” or the table of contents. If we know the book, chapter, and verses that we are looking for, the Bible’s table of contents will help us. Later, we’ll learn how to find a Bible passage when we don’t know its book, chapter, or verse. In a Bible’s table of contents, you will more than likely find the following:

- a list of the books of the Bible in the order in which they appear in the Old and New Testaments, as well as the page number on which each book begins
- an alphabetical listing of the books
- an alphabetical listing of the abbreviation of each book

A table of contents page in a typical Bible will look something like this.

### **Old Testament**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Page</b>
Genesis . . . . .	Gn . . . . .	1
Exodus . . . . .	Ex . . . . .	.50
Leviticus . . . . .	Lv . . . . .	.100
Numbers . . . . .	Nm . . . . .	.130
Deuteronomy . . . . .	Dt . . . . .	.170

. . . and so on, listing all forty-six Old Testament books. In the same way, the New Testament listing will look like this.

### **New Testament**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Page</b>
Matthew. . . . .	Mt . . . . .	1000
Mark. . . . .	Mk . . . . .	1050
Luke. . . . .	Lk . . . . .	1075
John. . . . .	Jn . . . . .	.1115

. . . and so on, listing all twenty-seven New Testament books. (Some Bibles start over at page 1 for the New Testament.) For a complete list of

all of the books of the Bible and their abbreviations, see page 118 of the Bible Resources section of this book (or pick up a Bible and check it out for yourself).

Sometimes a table of contents will include a separate alphabetical listing of the books in the Old and New Testaments. It might look something like this.

### **Old Testament**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Page</b>
Amos . . . . .	Am . . . . .	900
Baruch . . . . .	Bar . . . . .	.875
1 Chronicles . . . . .	1 Chr . . . . .	350
2 Chronicles . . . . .	2 Chr . . . . .	400
Daniel . . . . .	Dn . . . . .	950

. . . and so on.

### **New Testament**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Page</b>
Acts of the Apostles . . . . .	Acts . . . . .	1200
Colossians . . . . .	Col . . . . .	1300
1 Corinthians . . . . .	1 Cor . . . . .	1250
2 Corinthians . . . . .	2 Cor . . . . .	1275
Ephesians . . . . .	Eph . . . . .	1290

. . . and so on.

Now that we see how the Bible's catalog is arranged, let's take a closer look at how to use it.

### Is It “Judg.,” “Jg,” or “Jgs”?

Learning to use the abbreviation page of your Bible is critical to being able to locate Bible passages. One thing to consider, however, is that not all Bibles abbreviate books in the same way. A little later on, we'll discuss the differences between various Bibles and how to choose one, but for now, just know that different Bibles abbreviate the names of books in different ways. For example, the book of Judges can be found abbreviated as Judg., Jg, or Jgs, depending on which Bible translation you are looking at. Knowing that Bibles abbreviate books differently will help avoid a great deal of confusion, especially if you are in a group of people using a variety of Bible translations or editions.

### The Bible's Book Numbering System

In any library, you need to understand the numbering system used to shelve the books in a particular order so that you can find what you need. The same is true of locating passages in God's Library. No, the Bible uses neither Dewey decimal classification nor the Library of Congress classification system, but instead has its own system of identifying books, chapters, and verses. It's called Scripture citation. You've seen it before. It looks like this.

1 Pt 2:1–4

And like any system of classification, it will look like a foreign language until you learn the rules. The key to understanding Scripture citation

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**“It is good to read the testimonies of Scripture;  
it is good to seek the Lord our God in them.”**

—SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

---

is really quite simple. No matter the Bible translation or edition you are using, citations always follow this format: the name of the

book, followed by the chapter number, followed by the verse number (or the beginning and ending verse numbers).

The chapter number and the verse number(s) are separated by a colon. So,

1 Pt 2:1–4

means

1 Pt (name of the book) 2 (chapter number):1–4 (verses 1 through 4)

But what's a 1 Pt? If you refer to the abbreviation section in the alphabetical listing of books in your Bible's table of contents, you'll discover that 1 Pt is the First Letter of Peter. So, the citation refers to the First Letter of Peter, chapter 2, verses 1 through 4.

Here are a few more examples.

Jgs 15:6–15 = the book of Judges, chapter 15, verses 6 through 15

Zep 3:18–19 = the book of Zephaniah, chapter 3, verses 18 through 19

Jn 7:3–6, 10 = the Gospel of John, chapter 7, verses 3 through 6 and verse 10

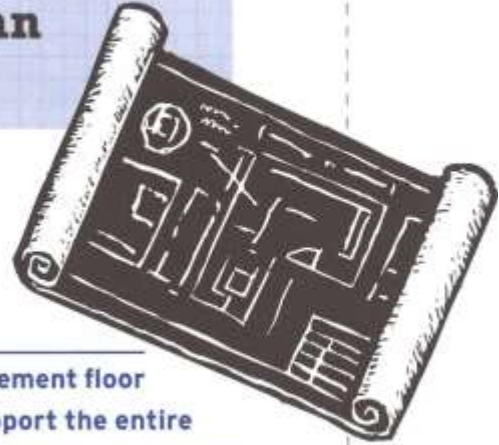
Ti 2:11–14 = the Letter to Titus, chapter 2, verses 11 through 14



A man's business is going down the drain. He is very depressed and doesn't know what to do. He goes to the priest who tells him, "Take a beach chair and a Bible and put them in your car and drive down to the edge of the ocean. Go to the water's edge. Take the beach chair out of the car, sit on it, and take the Bible out and open it up. The wind will riffle the pages for a while and eventually the Bible will stay open at a particular page. Read the first words your eyes fall on and they will tell you what to do." The man does as he is told. He sits on the chair at the water's edge and opens the Bible. The wind riffles the pages of the Bible and then stops at a particular page. He looks down at the Bible and his eyes fall on words, which tell him what he has to do. Three months later, the man, wearing a thousand-dollar Italian suit, comes back to see the priest and hands him a thick envelope full of money, telling him that he wants to donate this money to the parish in order to thank the priest for his wonderful advice. The priest is delighted. He asks him what words in the Bible brought this good fortune to him. The man replies, "Chapter 11."

## Chapter Four

### The Bible’s Floor Plan



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**One of the first things included in a blueprint is the basement floor plan which shows the location of the walls that will support the entire structure. As we look at the blueprint for God’s library—the Bible—a good place for us to start is with the floor plan so that we can come to recognize the foundation upon which the structure of the Bible rests.**

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Think back to when you learned how to ride a two-wheeler. More than likely, you used training wheels until you developed your own sense of balance. After much practice, the training wheels came off and you were on your way. In the same way, we are going to look at a simple tool that can be used like training wheels until you develop your own sense of how to maneuver through the Bible.

What should you do when you want to find the story of David and Goliath but you don’t know what book it is in? How does one develop a familiarity with the Bible so that wonderful stories and famous characters can be quickly located? In the back of this book you will find eight bookmarks (pages 125–131). You may cut these out or copy the text onto heavy stock to use as bookmarks.

A quick look at the floor plan of God’s library—the Bible—reveals to us that the Bible is split into two main sections, the Old and New Testaments. Both the Old and New Testaments are then divided again into four more sections. These divisions are listed in the table on the next page.

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And here, in order to strengthen Our teaching and Our exhortations, it is well to recall how, from the beginning of Christianity, all who have been renowned for holiness of life and sacred learning have given their deep and constant attention to Holy Scripture. (*Providentissimus Deus*, 7)

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Old Testament	New Testament
Pentateuch (Torah)	Gospels
History	Acts
Wisdom	Letters
Prophets	Revelation

Now that we know the names, let's do a little exercise. Using your Bible's table of contents, locate the last page of the book of Malachi (which is the last page of the Old Testament) and the first page of the Gospel of Matthew (which is the first page of the New Testament). Now, take a look at how the Bible is separated. Observe how large the Old Testament is compared to the New Testament. Now, consider the clearest and most simple distinction between the Old and New Testaments.



**Is this story directly related to the life of Jesus and the early Church? If the answer is yes, then you'll be looking in the New Testament. If not, you'll be searching through the Old Testament.**

The Old Testament is the story of God's relationship with the people of Israel *before* the birth of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament is the story of God's relationship with the People of God beginning with the life, death, Resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ and continuing with the early Church.

Once you have this clear distinction in your head, you will have a better understanding of where to begin searching for stories in the Bible by asking yourself one simple question: is this story directly related to the life of Jesus and the early Church? If the answer is yes, then you'll be looking in the New Testament. If not, you'll be searching through the Old Testament.

"Great," you may be saying, "but I still have to sift through a thousand pages to find the story I'm looking for!" This is true, but what we are about to do is to break the Bible down into the smaller sections mentioned in the table. The following outlines, which are also found on the bookmarks, can be seen as a brief introduction to the highlights of each section of the Bible. By using the bookmarks and the highlights outline, you can have easy access to the various parts of the Bible.

## Highlights of the Old Testament

Find the four bookmarks for the Old Testament that you cut out of the back of this book (see page 125) or that you copied onto another sheet of paper. Lay them out side by side next to your Bible.

**Pentateuch: The first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis through Deuteronomy** Place the Pentateuch (pronounced Pen-tuh-took) bookmark on the last page of the book of Deuteronomy. The pages from the beginning of Genesis to this bookmark make up the section called Pentateuch (Torah in the Hebrew Scriptures), meaning the five books of the Law. This section captures the beginnings of the relationship between God and the people of Israel with the central focus being the Exodus event—the experience of being led from slavery to freedom. Here are some of the highlights of this section:

- the Creation stories
- Adam and Eve
- Cain and Abel
- Noah's ark
- the Tower of Babel
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- Abraham and Sarah
- Isaac and Rebekah
- Jacob and Esau
- Joseph (the coat of many colors)
- Moses (in the reeds, the burning bush, the ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Passover, the Ten Commandments, the Ark of the Covenant, the journey through the desert, the death of Moses)
- the twelve tribes of Israel
- the laws, traditions, and feasts of Israel



"Okay, four-year-olds! Let's polish off the book of Leviticus!"

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## Why Did the NAB Do That?

The prefix *penta* means “five.” The *Pentateuch*, of course, consists of five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Don’t be confused, then, if you have a New American Bible in which you’ll find that the table of contents lists eight books in the Pentateuch: Genesis through Deuteronomy as well as Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.

“Why’s that?” you may ask. Basically, the editors of the NAB made this decision based on the fact that many early Greek manuscripts united Joshua, Judges, and Ruth with the Pentateuch because of the similarity in style and origin they all possess. The book of Joshua completes the Exodus narrative in that it demonstrates how God remained faithful in his promise of giving to the Israelites the land he had promised. Thus, the book of Joshua, together with the Pentateuch comprises what is known as the *Hexateuch*.

But wait, there’s more! The book of Judges contains an introduction (chapters 1–3) that connects it with the Joshua narrative, describing the events that followed the death of Joshua. Finally, until the fifth century, the book of Ruth was viewed as a part of the book of Judges. It is because of these connections that the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth are seen as related to or connected with the Pentateuch, although not technically a part of it. In fact, these eight books are sometimes referred to as the *Octateuch*. No kidding!

**History: Joshua through 2 Maccabees** Place the bookmark labeled History on the last page of 2 Maccabees. The section from the Pentateuch bookmark to this bookmark makes up the History section of the Bible. This section records the story of the people of Israel who, under various leaders (judges and kings), fought to establish and keep the Promised Land. Here are the highlights of this section:

- Joshua (crossing the Jordan, the walls of Jericho)
- Samson and Delilah
- Ruth and Naomi
- Samuel (request for a king)
- King Saul

- David and Goliath; King David
- Solomon (the temple, Queen of Sheba)
- Elijah and Elisha
- many kings, battles, and genealogies
- division of the kingdom
- Exile and return
- Judith and Esther

**Wisdom: Job through Sirach** Place the bookmark labeled Wisdom at the end of the book of Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus, as it is called in some Bibles). You're now ready to explore the Wisdom section of the Bible, which includes everything from the History bookmark to this bookmark. While the Bible is full of wisdom, this particular section gathers together all the wisdom teachings of the people of Israel that were collected over thousands of years of wandering the desert, living in the Promised Land, worshiping in the temple, and struggling through the Exile. This section includes many anecdotes, sayings, prayers, poems, and songs. Here are some highlights:

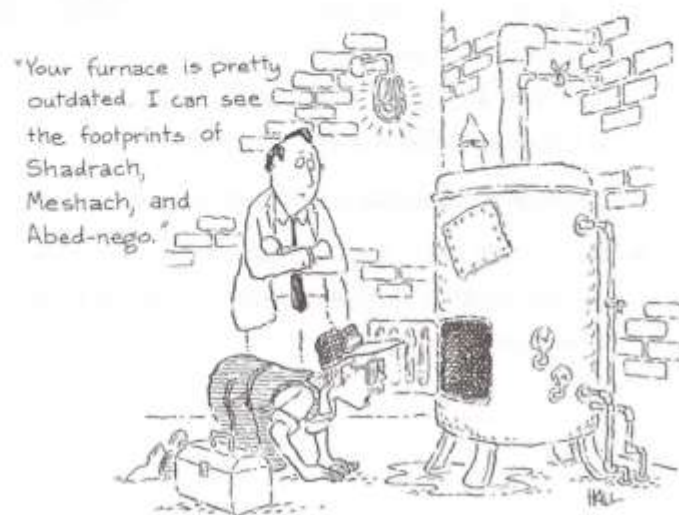
- Job's suffering
- 150 Psalms for all occasions
- hundreds of proverbs
- wise sayings, including "Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!" and "There is a time for everything" and "A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter"
- a romantic love song (Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon)
- thousands more sayings about wisdom, prudence, good health, wealth, holiness, family, friends, misery, death, and even table etiquette

### Are the Psalms Wisdom Literature?

While the Psalms are not technically considered wisdom literature (they are more appropriately liturgical hymns), Psalms traditionally have been placed with the Wisdom books.

**Prophets: Isaiah through Malachi** Place the last of your four Old Testament bookmarks, labeled Prophets, at the end of the book of Malachi, which is also the last page of the Old Testament. Welcome to the last section of the Old Testament—the Prophets (everything from your Wisdom bookmark to this one). The prophets were not concerned with foretelling the future. Their purpose was to call the people of Israel to return to their past fidelity to God lest they face dire consequences. And when the people of Israel found themselves mired in the Exile, the prophets held out hope for the future. This hope was the promise of a messiah and an everlasting kingdom. Yet, even these assurances of a future are accompanied by a call for a return to the fidelity of the past. Here are some highlights:

- The major (meaning lengthier) prophets
  - ◆ Isaiah (Immanuel, “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” “comfort my people,” etc.)
  - ◆ Jeremiah (call of Jeremiah, Exile and return)
  - ◆ Ezekiel (the dry bones)
- The minor (meaning briefer) prophets
  - ◆ Daniel (the lion’s den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)
  - ◆ Hosea (the unfaithful wife)
  - ◆ Joel (the Day of the Lord)
  - ◆ Amos (the call to justice)
  - ◆ Jonah (swallowed by a large fish)




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## Highlights of the New Testament

Find the four bookmarks for the New Testament that you cut out of the back of this book (see page 129) or that you copied onto another sheet of paper. Lay them out side by side next to your Bible.

**Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John** Place the bookmark labeled Gospels at the end of the Gospel of John. Between the bookmark for the Prophets and this bookmark is the beginning of the New Testament. It is also the section of the Bible in which we walk with Jesus. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) contain the stories that are most sacred to our Christian faith and heritage: stories of the life, teachings, miracles, Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. If you're looking for a story about Jesus, this is the place to look. Here are some highlights:

- the birth of Jesus (the Magi, the shepherds, etc.)
- the Holy Family (Mary and Joseph)
- the finding of Jesus in the temple
- the temptation in the desert and the baptism of Jesus
- the Beatitudes and the Our Father
- parables (the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan, the sower, the mustard seed, etc.)
- the Golden Rule and the Great Commandment
- numerous miracles (calming of the storm, raising of Lazarus, changing water into wine, feeding of the five thousand, walking on water, healing of the blind, deaf, and paralyzed, etc.)
- the Last Supper, Eucharist, and the washing of the feet
- the Agony in the Garden
- Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal
- the way of the cross
- the Crucifixion



**The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) contain the stories that are most sacred to our Christian faith and heritage: stories of the life, teachings, miracles, Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.**

- the Resurrection and appearances
- dozens of fascinating characters: Zacchaeus, Pontius Pilate, Mary Magdalene, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary, etc.
- powerful images such as the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and the Way, the Truth, and the Life

### Who Wrote the Gospels?

We sometimes think that the Gospels were written as the events took place, as though the Evangelists were reporters “on the scene.” Or, we may think that a few short years after the events took place, each of the Evangelists was seized by a moment of inspiration, picked up a plume, and transcribed their Gospels as dictated by the Holy Spirit. Actually, the Gospels were proclaimed orally for decades before they were gathered into written form.

- Mark’s Gospel was written first, shortly before the year AD 70.
- The Gospels of Matthew and Luke (both using Mark’s Gospel as a resource) were written shortly after AD 70.
- Finally, the Gospel of John was written about twenty years after Matthew and Luke.

It is not likely that the Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) actually put pen to paper. They were most likely deceased by the time their accounts were recorded in written form by loyal followers. When we say that the Gospels were inspired, we are saying that this entire process was guided by the Holy Spirit.

**Acts of the Apostles** Getting to know this section of the Bible is easy because it is just one book: the Acts of the Apostles. Place the bookmark labeled Acts of the Apostles at the end of this book and relive the experience of the early Christian community. In many ways, the book of Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke because Luke and Acts were written by the same author. Here are some highlights of the Acts:

- Jesus’ ascension
- the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

- descriptions of the communal life of the early Church
- Stephen's martyrdom
- Philip and the Ethiopian
- Saul's conversion and baptism
- the missionary work of Peter, Saul (Paul), Barnabas, and others
- miracles performed through Peter and Paul
- Paul's travels, imprisonment, trials, shipwreck, and arrival in Rome

**Letters (also called Epistles): Romans through Jude** Place the bookmark labeled Letters at the end of the Letter of Jude. Everything from the Acts of the Apostles bookmark up to this one represents the communications of the early Church, before e-mails, phones, and faxes. A little more than half of the twenty-one letters, or epistles, are attributed to Paul and the Pauline tradition. All of the letters are addressed to communities of Christians and to the leaders of these communities, and were designed to teach, admonish, encourage, correct, and update the various churches. Here are some highlights:

- The letters of Paul (such as Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians) feature theology, teachings, and exhortations concerning
  - ♦ grace
  - ♦ justification by faith
  - ♦ the Law
  - ♦ the Eucharist
  - ♦ the metaphor of the Body
  - ♦ variety and unity of gifts
  - ♦ ministry
  - ♦ suffering
  - ♦ Christ and his cross
  - ♦ Christian conduct
- James (faith and good works, Anointing of the Sick)
- 1 Peter (be prepared to explain your hope)
- 1 John ("Beloved, let us love one another ...")



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**As you enter the book of Revelation, be aware that it is one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible.**

**Revelation** Place the last bookmark, labeled Revelation, at the end of the book of Revelation and you've reached the end of the Bible. As you enter the book of Revelation, be aware that it is one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. Many falsely use this book to predict the end of the world. Written in apocalyptic style, the book of Revelation uses many symbols and figurative language to describe the eternal struggle between good and evil. Despite all of the frightening imagery, the uplifting conclusion of this book is that good has and always will prevail. Here are the highlights:

- visions and messages to the seven churches
- the scroll and the lamb
- the one hundred forty-four thousand saved
- the seven trumpets
- the woman and the dragon
- the King of kings
- the thousand-year reign
- the new heavens and new earth
- the new Jerusalem
- "Come, Lord Jesus!"

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**"There's nothing written in the Bible, Old or New Testament, that says, 'If you believe in Me, you ain't going to have no troubles.'"**

—RAY CHARLES


---

## Practicing with Your “Training Wheels”

Now that your bookmarks are in place, practice locating some of the highlights outlined on the bookmarks themselves or on the previous few pages. Browse through a section of the Bible and search for some of the famous characters and place names. Don't set out to read whole sections. For now, just browse around until you discover passages that you are particularly interested in reading right now. If you don't understand a section or the reading is becoming tedious and difficult to understand, move on.

As you become more and more skilled at Bible reading, you can return to the more difficult and challenging sections. As you tackle these more difficult sections, you may wish to consult books about the Bible that can help you make sense of what you are reading. (See page 114 for a list of suggested readings.) For now, focus on getting to know the sections of the Bible so that you've got a firm sense of what can be found in each section. Most important, use your bookmarks to become more familiar with where these various sections of the Bible are. Your bookmarks will act as training wheels for the time being, assisting you in traversing the terrain of the Bible. Eventually, however, the training wheels must come off. When you feel you have worked hard at getting to know the locations of the various sections of the Bible, remove your bookmarks and continue trying to locate passages, stories, and characters in their respective sections. You should find that by familiarizing yourself with the themes and topics treated in various sections, you are able to find particular stories and passages more quickly and with greater confidence.

Develop your Bible blueprint skills by doing the following exercise.



A catechist asked his class to draw pictures of their favorite Bible stories. He was puzzled by Sandy's picture, which showed four people on an airplane, so he asked her which story it was meant to represent. "The flight to Egypt," said Sandy. "I see . . . and that must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus," the catechist said. "But who's the fourth person?" "Oh, that's Pontius," replied Sandy, "the Pilot."



## Quiz

Read the list of stories and characters below and match the letter of the section of the Bible that you believe includes this story or character. The answers can be found at the bottom of the page.

- a.** Pentateuch    **c.** Wisdom    **e.** Gospels    **g.** Letters  
**b.** History    **d.** Prophets    **f.** Acts    **h.** Revelation

- |                                                |                                             |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Solomon's Temple                      | _____ 11. David and Goliath                 |
| _____ 2. The seventh trumpet                   | _____ 12. Moses and the burning bush        |
| _____ 3. Jonah and the large fish              | _____ 13. Zacchaeus                         |
| _____ 4. Saul's conversion                     | _____ 14. The raising of Lazarus            |
| _____ 5. Noah's ark                            | _____ 15. The dry bones                     |
| _____ 6. Jacob and Esau                        | _____ 16. Joseph, "the coat of many colors" |
| _____ 7. The scriptural way of the cross       | _____ 17. Justification by faith            |
| _____ 8. Stephen's martyrdom                   | _____ 18. The Holy Spirit at Pentecost      |
| _____ 9. Paul writing to the people of Ephesus | _____ 19. Samson and Delilah                |
| _____ 10. The New Jerusalem                    | _____ 20. The Ten Commandments              |

### Quiz Answers

1. b; 2. h; 3. d; 4. f; 5. a; 6. a; 7. e; 8. f; 9. g; 10. h;  
11. b; 12. a; 13. e; 14. e; 15. d; 16. a; 17. g; 18. f; 19. b; 20. a.



Bible Bookmarks, pages 125-131 – teachers must obtain a purchased copy of The Bible Blueprint for rights to distribute bookmark copies to your students (about \$10 USD)

<h2 style="text-align: center;">PENTATEUCH</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Genesis through Deuteronomy</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Old Testament</i></p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">HISTORY</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Joshua through 2 Maccabees</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Old Testament</i></p>
<p>Place this bookmark on the last page of the book of Deuteronomy. Welcome to the section called the “Pentateuch” or “Torah,” meaning the five books of the Law. This section captures the beginnings of the relationship between God and the people of Israel with the central focus being the Exodus event—the experience of being led from slavery to freedom. Here are some of the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ the Creation stories</li><li>■ Adam and Eve</li><li>■ Cain and Abel</li><li>■ Noah’s ark</li><li>■ the Tower of Babel</li><li>■ Sodom and Gomorrah</li><li>■ Abraham and Sarah</li><li>■ Isaac and Rebekah</li><li>■ Jacob and Esau</li><li>■ Joseph (the coat of many colors)</li><li>■ Moses (in the reeds, the burning bush, the ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Passover, the Ten Commandments, the Ark of the Covenant, the journey through the desert, the death of Moses)</li><li>■ the twelve tribes of Israel</li><li>■ the laws, traditions, and feasts of Israel</li></ul>	<p>Place this bookmark on the last page of 2 Maccabees. You’ve now entered the History section of the Bible—the section that records the story of the people of Israel who, under various leaders (judges and kings), fought to establish and keep the Promised Land. Here are the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Joshua (crossing the Jordan, the walls of Jericho)</li><li>■ Samson and Delilah</li><li>■ Ruth and Naomi</li><li>■ Samuel (request for a king)</li><li>■ King Saul</li><li>■ David and Goliath; King David</li><li>■ Solomon (the temple, Queen of Sheba)</li><li>■ Elijah and Elisha</li><li>■ many kings, battles, and genealogies</li><li>■ division of the kingdom</li><li>■ Exile and return</li><li>■ Judith and Esther</li></ul>

## WISDOM

Job through Sirach

*Old Testament*

Place this bookmark at the end of the book of Sirach. You're now ready to explore the Wisdom section of the Bible. While the Bible contains wisdom throughout, this section collects the wisdom of the people of Israel over thousands of years of wandering the desert, living in the Promised Land, worshiping in the temple, and struggling through the Exile. Among the many anecdotes, sayings, prayers, poems, and songs, here are some highlights:

- Job's suffering
- 150 Psalms for all occasions
- hundreds of proverbs
- wise sayings, including "Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!" and "There is a time for everything" and "A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter" and more
- a romantic love song
- thousands more sayings about wisdom, prudence, good health, wealth, holiness, family, friends, misery, death, and even table etiquette

## PROPHETS

Isaiah through Malachi

*Old Testament*

Place this at the end of the book of Malachi and welcome to the last section of the Old Testament—the Prophets. The prophets were not concerned with foretelling the future as much as with calling the people of Israel back to their past fidelity to God, lest they face doom. Likewise, they held out hope for the future when the people of Israel faced dire consequences in exile. This hope was the notion of a messiah and an everlasting kingdom. Yet, even these assurances of a future are accompanied by a call for a return to the fidelity of the past. Here are some highlights:

### The major (meaning lengthier) prophets

- Isaiah (Immanuel, "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light," "comfort my people," etc.)
- Jeremiah (call of Jeremiah, Exile and return )
- Ezekiel (the dry bones)

### The minor (meaning briefer) prophets

- Daniel (the lion's den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)
- Hosea (the unfaithful wife)
- Joel (the Day of the Lord)
- Amos (the call to justice)
- Jonah (swallowed by a large fish)

## GOSPELS

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

*New Testament*

Place this bookmark at the end of the Gospel of John and prepare to enter the part of the Bible where we walk with Jesus! The Gospels contain the stories that are most sacred to our Christian faith and heritage: the life, teachings, miracles, Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Here are some highlights:

- the birth of Jesus (the Magi, the shepherds, etc.)
- the Holy Family (Mary and Joseph)
- the finding of Jesus in the temple
- the temptation in the desert and the baptism of Jesus
- the Beatitudes and the Our Father
- parables (the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan, the sower, the mustard seed, etc.)
- the Golden Rule and the Great Commandment
- numerous miracles (calming of the storm, raising of Lazarus, changing water into wine, feeding of the five thousand, walking on water, healing of the blind, deaf, and paralyzed, etc.)
- the Last Supper, Eucharist, and the washing of the feet
- the Agony in the Garden
- Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal
- the way of the cross and Crucifixion
- the Resurrection and appearances
- dozens of fascinating characters: Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary, etc.
- powerful images such as the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and the Way, Truth, and the Life

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

*New Testament*

This section of the Bible is easy because it is just one book—the Acts of the Apostles. Place your bookmark at the end of this book and relive the experience of the early Christian community. In many ways, the book of Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke because both were written by the same author. Here are some highlights of the Acts:

- Jesus' ascension
- the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
- descriptions of the communal life of the early Church
- Stephen's martyrdom
- Philip and the Ethiopian
- Saul's conversion and baptism
- the missionary work of Peter, Saul (Paul), Barnabas, and others
- miracles performed through Peter and Paul
- Paul's travels, imprisonment, trials, shipwreck, and arrival in Rome

## LETTERS *(also called Epistles)*

Romans through Jude

*New Testament*

Place this bookmark at the end of the Letter of Jude. Welcome to the communications of the early Church, before e-mails, phones, and faxes. Of the twenty-one letters, a little more than half are attributed to Paul. All of the letters are addressed to communities of Christians and to the leaders of these communities, and were designed to teach, admonish, encourage, correct, and update the various churches. Here are some highlights:

**The letters of Paul** (such as Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians) feature theology, teachings, and exhortations concerning

- grace
- justification by faith
- the Law
- the Eucharist
- the metaphor of the Body
- variety and unity of gifts
- ministry
- suffering
- Christ and his cross
- Christian conduct

**James:** faith and good works,  
Anointing of the Sick

**1 Peter:** be prepared to explain  
your hope

**1 John:** "Beloved, let us love  
one another . . ."

## REVELATION

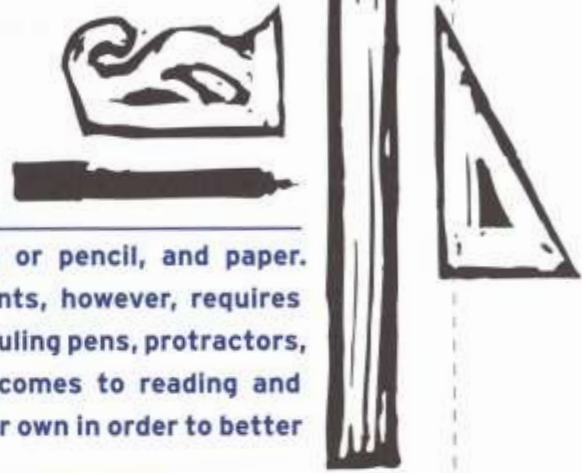
*New Testament*

Place your last bookmark at the end of the book of Revelation and you've reached the end of the Bible! As you enter the book of Revelation, be aware that it is one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. Many falsely use this book to predict the end of the world. Written in apocalyptic style, the book of Revelation uses many symbols and figurative language to describe the eternal struggle between good and evil. Despite all of the frightening imagery, the uplifting conclusion of this book is that good has and always will prevail. Here are the highlights:

- visions and messages to the seven churches
- the scroll and the lamb
- the one hundred forty-four thousand saved
- the seven trumpets
- the woman and the dragon
- the King of kings
- the thousand-year reign
- the new heavens and new earth
- the new Jerusalem
- "Come, Lord Jesus!"

## Chapter Eight

# Draftsman Tools: The Tools of Interpretation



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Sketching, in general, simply involves a pen or pencil, and paper. Technical sketching, such as drafting blueprints, however, requires specialized instruments including compasses, ruling pens, protractors, and triangles—just to name a few. When it comes to reading and interpreting the Bible, we need a few tools of our own in order to better understand what God’s Word is saying to us.

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In Polish culture, it is customary to say, *Smacznego!* (smoch-NEH-go), when about to eat a meal with others. What does it mean in English? It’s the equivalent of *Bon appétit!* Oops. Wait. That’s French. So, just what does *smacznego* mean? Well, that’s the problem. Unfortunately, the English language doesn’t really have a word that exactly captures the essence of *smacznego*. In other words, if you ask several different people what *smacznego* means in English, you may get several different answers depending upon one’s interpretation. When we go from one language to another, we need to interpret what we believe the original language is attempting to say.

What does this have to do with the Bible? Well, first and foremost, the Bible was *not* written in English (nor did Jesus speak English). When people get nervous about interpreting the Bible, they have to realize that every Bible that is not written in the original language of the author *is* an interpretation. Most biblical texts were originally

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But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. (*Dei Verbum*, 10)

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**The Protestant Old Testament excludes the following books: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, and First and Second Maccabees.**

written in Hebrew or Greek. By the third century, the Old Testament books originally written in Hebrew were translated into Greek, and by the fifth century, the entire Bible was translated into Latin. As centuries progressed, the Bible was translated into dozens of languages. In other words, when someone gets upset about *contemporary* translations of the Bible, insisting that we use the *original* text (usually meaning the

King James Version), they had better be prepared to read either Hebrew or Greek because there is no such thing as the *original* English text.

Every Bible is an interpretation of the original text. Therefore, we need not be afraid of the word *interpretation* when it comes to the Bible. We are called to interpret the Bible within the context of our faith tradition and within the context of the author's original intent as best we can through scholarly research. Let's take a closer look at how we interpret the Bible as a faith community and as an individual within that faith community.

### **How Do I Choose a Bible?**

If different Bibles employ different interpretations, how can one select a Bible that is consistent with a Catholic approach to the Word of God? First, we need to understand the difference between Catholic and Protestant Bibles. While both are the inspired Word of God, it is important to note that our two traditions have different "floor plans" for organizing God's Library. Both the Catholic and Protestant traditions have developed their own final list of which books are considered inspired and thus to be included in the Bible. This final official list is referred to as the canon. The Catholic canon contains the seventy-three books we outlined earlier: forty-six Old Testament and twenty-seven New Testament. The Protestant canon includes sixty-six books, excluding seven Old Testament books: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, and First and Second Maccabees. Why the difference?

In the first century after Christ, rabbis in Palestine gathered to form the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures. They selected only those thirty-nine books that were written in Hebrew and had existed for what they considered to be a significant period of time. Around the same time, however,

Greek-speaking Jews were using an Old Testament canon made up of forty-six books, including some books that were written in Greek or were of a more recent authorship than those in the Hebrew canon. Early Christians used both the Hebrew canon and the Greek canon of the



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"It's not the most accurate or inspiring version, but my brother-in-law, Bubba, was on the translation committee."

Old Testament. Although the early Church included these seven books as part of the canon, opinion was divided regarding their canonical status. St. Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin in the fifth century (his translation is called the Vulgate), referred to these seven books as the apocrypha, meaning "hidden." Although he included these books in his translation, he considered them to be outside of the canon. Thus, for many centuries, the exact standing of these seven Old Testament books continued to be called into question by some.

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**"It is not hard for any man, who hath a Bible in his hands, to borrow good words and holy sayings in abundance; but to make them his own, is a work of grace, only from above."**

—JOHN MILTON

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During the Reformation in the sixteenth century, Protestants established a canon of thirty-nine Old Testament books, using only those books recognized as canonical by the first century Jews and dismissing the apocryphal books. From this came the King James Version, which remained the standard biblical text in English until the twentieth century. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1545–63) definitively affirmed these seven apocryphal books as part of the canon, referring to them as deuterocanonical, which means a "second canon." Thus, the deuterocanonical books are those whose Scriptural character, once contested, have been affirmed as part of the canon of the Bible.

## A Catholic Bible

Just because a Bible has the word *Catholic* on it (such as the New Living Translation: Catholic Reference Edition, by Tyndale House) does not mean that it has been approved for Catholic audiences. The best way to determine if a Bible is approved for Catholic readership is to look for what is called an imprimatur (im-pri-MAH-tur) near the inside cover of a Bible. The imprimatur, followed by the name of the Roman Catholic authority issuing it, indicates that the translation is acceptable for use by Roman Catholics.

So, the first thing to know about the differences between Catholic and Protestant Bibles is in terms of which books are included. However, using this rule on its own can be tricky because many Protestant publishers, eager to get a share in the growing market for Catholic Bible readership, are now including the deuterocanonical books in their Bible editions. This leads us to a second way the two types of Bible versions differ—in the content of the support materials, study helps, and learning tools, such as footnotes and commentaries. When these support materials venture into the area of doctrine, the differences

between a Catholic Bible and a Protestant Bible can be profound. For example, support materials in a Protestant Bible may make reference to the recognition of two—and only two—sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Catholics, of course, recognize seven sacraments. Some Protestant Bibles include support materials that take a fundamentalist approach not in keeping with the Catholic approach we covered in the last chapter. Finally, a few Protestant Bibles (e.g., the Scofield Bible, the Tyndale Bible) can include support materials that are blatantly anti-Catholic. So, if you are seeking an interpretation of biblical texts that is in line with Catholic Tradition, it is best to use a Catholic Bible.

Well into the twentieth century, the only Catholic versions of the Bible were translated from St. Jerome's Latin version of the fifth century. In 1943, Pope Pius XII called for a Catholic translation based on the earliest available manuscripts and the original languages. Since that time, several translations have been made under Catholic sponsorship.

Which translation do we use at Mass on Sundays? The New American Bible (NAB) is the translation that we hear proclaimed at Mass in the United States. It makes sense to use this translation in your own studies and prayer since it will be reinforced at Sunday liturgy. A very popular

version of the New American Bible is the Catholic Study Bible, which provides extensive footnotes and commentary. Another very popular Catholic Bible is the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB). The NJB was translated primarily by Catholic scholars in Great Britain. Another version that is more ecumenical in the makeup of its Scripture scholars but still carries an imprimatur is the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Rather than attempting to provide an exhaustive guide to selecting Bibles, know that if a Bible carries an imprimatur, it is considered acceptable for Catholic readership.

### **The Apocryphal Gospels**

Some books, such as the Gospel of Thomas or the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, didn't make it into the Bible. Such writings that have not been included in the New Testament are referred to as *apocryphal*, meaning "hidden" or "secret." From the beginning of the Church, the faithful did not embrace these books as inspired Scripture. While Biblical scholars believe that some of these writings may include actual words and events from Jesus' life (most of which have parallels in the four Gospels of the New Testament), most lack real historical value and even include outlandish accounts of Jesus' life that attempt to fill in the cracks supposedly left by the other Gospels. On the other hand, it is from these apocryphal accounts that we get the names of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anne, and the legend of the blossoming of Joseph's staff as a sign that he was to take Mary as his bride. In other words, the apocryphal Gospels are valuable pieces of literature but are not considered inspired Scripture.

### **Recognizing Different Types of Literature**

No doubt, you do not read all of your mail in the same manner. Junk mail gets tossed with nary a glance while personal mail may be read over and over (and kept under your pillow at night!) The more mail you get (and the older and wiser you become), the better you become at identifying what type of mail it is you are about to read. You even learn not to be fooled by the envelopes that tell you you may have just won ten million dollars.

One of the first steps involved in interpreting the Bible is to learn to identify just what type of literature it is that you are reading. Like sorting out the daily mail, you can separate different types of biblical literature into different categories. Just as we do not read all of our mail in the same way, we do not read every type of biblical literature in the same manner.



The coordinator of the parish Bible study decided to invite his new neighbor to attend the next session. He knocked on the door and thought he could hear someone moving about, but his repeated knocks went unanswered. He took out a business card and wrote "Revelation 3:20" ("Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking") on the back of it and stuck it in the door. The next morning, he found that his card had been returned to his own doorstep. On the back was written, "Genesis 3:10." Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he found the following passage: "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked."

The more we read the Bible, the better we will become at differentiating a parable from a proverb, a genealogy from a discourse, a psalm from a letter, and a prophecy from a legal code.

The key to determining what type of literature you are reading in the Bible is to look at what you're reading within its broader context. Each book of the Bible has its own introduction that will often tell you what type of literature you are about to encounter. Likewise, the footnotes we discussed earlier will often reveal clues about the type of literature

under scrutiny. Finally, any Scripture passage must be interpreted in light of its broader context, namely, in relation to the preceding and following chapters and verses.

Let's take a look at an example. Suppose we were reading the following passage:

As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1 Cor 14:33–35)

What are we to make of a passage like this? If we take this passage literally and isolated from its context, we can conclude that women should not be allowed any speaking roles in our celebrations of the Eucharist. But, we know this is not true because women and men participate in all of the spoken responses of the Mass. Likewise, women may serve as lectors, proclaiming God's Word to the assembly. Let's take a look at some key questions we must ask any time we attempt to properly interpret Scripture.

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"Willard, I'm starting to question your interpretation of those passages about submission."

*What type of literature is this?* If we go back to the title of the book that this passage is taken from, we find that we are reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians. This means that we are reading a letter written to a specific group of people who lived in Corinth during the first century AD. We need to understand the general purpose of Paul's letters and the role they played in the early Church. When we recognize this literature as a letter, we recognize that we need to get the flavor of the whole letter before we isolate specific verses.

*What do we know of the author?* In many books of the Bible, we do not know precisely who the author was. In this passage, we are fortunate enough to know that St. Paul is the writer. The more we know about St. Paul's style of writing and his theology, the better we are able to interpret passages from his work. Paul was not afraid to speak his mind and felt very strongly about the need for order in the community.

*Who was the target audience for this work?* Who were the people of Corinth? In order to understand this passage, we need to learn a little bit about the people it was addressed to. Depending on the Bible version you are using, there may be some good background information on audience in the introduction to 1 Corinthians. In this example, we discover that the Church of Corinth had many problems. Paul felt it was his responsibility

to address these problems in a straightforward manner to achieve order in the community.

*What is the overall thrust of the chapter of the book?* Taken in isolation, we can conclude that this passage compels us to forbid women to speak in church. However, when we look at the overall context of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, we find that Paul seems to be contradicting some earlier statements he made about the role of women at worship. In chapter 11, verse 5, Paul writes that "any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head." Here, Paul clearly is addressing the possibility of women speaking in liturgical leadership roles. When we return to 14:34–35, we find upon close examination that Paul is referring to the notion of women *asking questions* during the liturgy ("If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home"). He is not suggesting here that women have no role in worship. He is talking about keeping order in the assembly. In fact, the overall context of this chapter and the whole book reveals that Paul is trying to establish liturgical order and reconcile differing factions. So, taken in context, Paul is not so much speaking about the role of women as he is speaking about

liturgical order and about ending the chaos and confusion that reigned at Corinthian liturgical assemblies.

*How do we interpret this passage for today?* It is our responsibility as individuals within a faith tradition to interpret what this passage is saying to us today. Paul was speaking to a culture in which the role of women was profoundly different than it is in most cultures and

societies today. His comments on women are the result of the culture in which he was writing. Today, we must ask what the proper liturgical roles are when we gather to celebrate Eucharist; what our present-day understanding of the equality and dignity of women is; and how the words of St. Paul can inspire us to celebrate liturgy with proper respect for its rubrics, roles, and order.



**The more we read the Bible, the better we will become at differentiating a parable from a proverb, a genealogy from a discourse, a psalm from a letter, and a prophecy from a legal code.**

## Interpretation Tools: Forms of Criticism

It is through the process of interpretation that the Word of God continues to speak to people throughout the ages. The Bible was written at a time when most people were farmers or at least intimately familiar with rural life and lived under monarchic rule. When the biblical authors recorded their experiences of God's saving presence in their lives, they did not have a society of cellular phones, Internet-wired personal computers, and laser technology. For that reason, it is up to us, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Church, to interpret the Word of God as it applies to our contemporary situation. Despite the new world we live in, the central experiences of life remain unaltered. The Word of God is timeless. We need only to transport it from its original setting and language to our contemporary situation. In order to do this, Scripture scholars offer us some very helpful tools for interpretation called forms of criticism. Let's take a brief look at some.

**Historical Criticism** This method of criticism attempts to ascertain as accurately as possible what the author's original intent was. Historical criticism looks closely at what was happening at the time, what the people of the time were experiencing, and the audience for whom the author was writing. Today, archeology plays an important role in learning as much as we can about the place and times of the Scripture passage in question. Another aspect of the historical approach is the attempt to determine who the author actually was. We know today that it was common practice in biblical times to credit a literary work to someone who may not have actually taken pen to paper. Today, we consider that fraud. Recall, however, that the Bible was recorded in a time when most people were illiterate. Most forms of literature were passed along orally for decades, if not centuries, before they were written down. As with any oral tradition, the stories take on the flavor of those passing them along. Since we believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we are saying that God inspired this entire process. In the end, as long as a piece of literature was said to have been from the tradition of an individual, it was deemed proper to add that person's name to the title of the book. This does not take away from the validity of the Bible but reveals how God works through a very human

The Word of God is timeless.



## Appendix 3 – Prayer: The Soul of our Teaching

Excerpt from *An Evangelizing Catechesis: Teaching from Your Encounter with Christ*, by James C. Pauley (Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2020).

### CHAPTER TWO

# Prayer

## The Soul of Our Teaching

I grew up in the southwestern desert of the United States, so I'm quite familiar with the dry washes that pervade Arizona's arid landscape. In the spring when the snows in the mountains melt, these washes surge with waters. But it is not long before the waters slow to a trickle as their sources in the mountains are exhausted. Eventually, they become streambeds of dry sand, meandering memorials to the vigor and zeal of those first weeks of spring.

How familiar this reality is in the spiritual life of many catechists. Catechists so frequently extend themselves in generosity, giving their passion to this work. Unfortunately, reassuring signs that they are making a difference in the lives of those they teach can be infrequent or nonexistent. If catechists cannot draw from inner depths sustained by the living waters welling up within that the Lord promised to the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:14), they will not be able to maintain their passion for long. Each Christian wishing to give substantively to others must draw from the depths of the spiritual life himself.

"If you are wise," writes the great Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, "you will be reservoirs and not channels." Spiritual writer Jean-Baptiste Chautard explains: "The channels let the water flow away, and do not retain a drop. But the reservoir is first filled, and then, without emptying itself, pours out its overflow, which is ever renewed, over the fields which it waters"<sup>1</sup> Chautard continues: "How many there are devoted to works, who are never anything but channels, and retain nothing for themselves, but remain dry while trying to pass on life-giving grace to souls!"<sup>2</sup> The advice, then, of Saint Bernard and Jean-Baptiste Chautard? Be filled with God. Prioritize communion with him. This is especially necessary for those responsible for introducing others to that living

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Chautard, OCSO, *The Soul of the Apostolate* (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1946), 55. The words of Saint Bernard may be found in *Sermons on the Song of Songs*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

water who is Christ: parents, pastors, catechists. When we ourselves draw upon this deep reservoir of communion with God, we are able to give ourselves over time to the apostolate of helping others receive these life-giving waters.

Chances are, you picked up this book because you want to be a better communicator of the Faith. You want those you teach to respond to Christ's great proposal with a resounding, lifelong "Yes!" What is it that makes such a response possible in our students? We might be tempted to come up with a list of abilities we try to bring to our catechesis. Perhaps we think it is our personal level of conviction regarding the content of the Faith and our own creativity that make us effective. Or maybe it is our attempts to build relationships and rapport with those we teach. Or perhaps it's our speaking ability or our knowledge of the cultural influences in which our students live. Or maybe it's our ability to make them laugh. As important as our personal talents and teaching methods are, they are not the source of our effectiveness.

Rather, we must turn first to an even more fundamental and mysterious wellspring. To effectively lead those we teach to communion with God, we must attend to the depth and quality of our own union with him in prayer. As a soul gives life to a body, so too will our own communion with God animate and empower our teaching. Fruitfulness in teaching can only be achieved in God — through him, with him, and in him. Our natural creative capacities are, on their own, radically insufficient to this mission. Perhaps, with me, you find such an acknowledgment to be liberating. Simply put, we need God.

With Saint John Paul II, we can also say this about the catechist's prayer life: "Unless the missionary is a contemplative, he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way."<sup>3</sup> It is our own life in God that will make us believable guides in the way of Christ.

## **UNION WITH CHRIST: THE NECESSARY INGREDIENT**

Union with Christ was important for the seventy-two disciples whom the Lord sent out in pairs to proclaim the Kingdom of God. They returned from this mission rejoicing, having experienced considerable fruit in their proclamation of the kingdom (cf. Lk 10:1-20). Of course, their connection with the Lord was profound, as they knew themselves to have been appointed and sent by him.

Perhaps there is no more compelling biblical example of a disciple being in union with Christ and experiencing fruitfulness as a teacher than that of Saint Peter. Late in the Gospel of John, Peter appears to be a different man after professing three times to the Risen One, "Lord, you know that I love you!" After each of these professions of love, the Lord charges Peter to "feed my sheep" (Jn 21:15-17). We see here the profound dependence of Peter's mission upon his closeness to Christ.

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, accessed April 20, 2020, Vatican.va, par. 91. The *Catechism's* treatment of contemplation is well worth reading, to better understand what Saint John Paul II means. See especially CCC 2709-2719.

We also see with what tenderness Christ extends the opportunity for healing: one restorative confession of love for each of Peter's denials during Jesus' trial. This event of extraordinary vulnerability and intimacy conformed Peter deeply to the Master he loved. The mission he was given was rooted in this profession of love and also in his certainty of the Master's union with him. Once he received the divine gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Peter was able to stand with his fellow apostles, deep in communion with God, and fearlessly proclaim the Gospel. "You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words" (Acts 2:14). The fruit that accompanied his first catechesis in the subsequent verses must have surprised him. After all, just weeks earlier Peter had been nearly overcome by fear and self-reprehension. As his hearers were "cut to the heart," asking, "What are we to do, my brothers?" perhaps Peter, too, was more deeply cut to the heart by the grace of God alive in him and working through him (cf. Acts 2:37).

Every person has a deep need to be formed in the Faith by catechist-disciples who truly know the Lord and are able to live as witnesses to the joy of the Gospel. For us, we might look back on our own experience of being formed by our most influential catechists and see that it was truly Christ alive in them who ignited our curiosity and deepened our desire for God. On the other hand, we might not have received a compelling witness from our catechists in our most formative years. For far too many young people, this lack of witness contributes to their loss of interest in the Faith. But in some situations – perhaps our own – knowing that something essential is missing can provoke questions and needs that eventually propel a person toward Jesus. Thanks be to God when he brings such good out of a situation of poverty.

The catechist's spiritual life, then, enlivens catechesis like nothing else can. The disciple-catechist becomes more and more convincing as the integrity between his faith and life increases. For catechists who intently pursue holiness of life, how we think, act, love, serve others, suffer, pray, and worship becomes, through our communion with Christ, more harmonious with what we teach. We then become inspiring teachers of the Faith – frequently unbeknownst to us – because the fruits of our life in Christ have an attractive power. As we become more transparent to Christ alive in us, more conformed to him through a life of ongoing conversion, the possibility increases that our students will meet him in us, because he is truly alive in us.

What does this pursuit of holiness look like for catechists and teachers today? Here is one account from a first-time Catholic schoolteacher, as she faced difficulty in her first few months of teaching. Jessica Schuster of Swanton, Ohio, writes:

I graduated from my Catholic university committed to a relationship with Jesus Christ. My relationship with him had been nourished by daily Mass and daily prayer time before the Blessed Sacrament, strengthened through challenges, protected by self-discipline and habit, supported by friends in the same state of striving, and bolstered

by constant reminders from my professors that we could not give to others what we did not have ourselves. In short, I was confident that I would be entering the field with a solid (even, perhaps, an unshakable) spiritual life.

Just weeks before my December graduation, I was asked by a pastor to consider a teaching position at his school that had unexpectedly become available. After spending much time in prayer and discernment, I felt that the Lord was calling me to take the job and that his grace would supply for what I lacked in experience. Two weeks after I was hired, the spring semester began.

There were difficulties almost immediately. In addition to the challenges of being a first-time teacher, which I expected, I experienced conflict with another faculty member that I could not have foreseen. I was deeply shaken; for the first time in my life, I felt like an utter failure, and began to doubt the Lord and myself. Surely I had made a mistake in discerning that this job was the Lord's will for me . . . and yet, I had asked him to show me his will, and he had made clear this path for me. Where was his hand in this? In my misery and distrust, I began to fold in upon myself and let go of my spiritual moorings. I decided I had neither the time nor the energy to attend daily Mass at the end of the school day. Even though I knew I should have been running to the Lord to let him console and guide me, I soon stopped taking time to listen to his voice.

By the end of the school year, I was a mess — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I had decided not to return to my teaching position, and as I faced my unknown future, I realized that I could not truly discern and hear the Lord's will for my life unless I set aside the time to be with him and let my heart grow accustomed once again to the sound of his voice above all others. I wrote in my journal:

#### My Resolutions Moving Forward

- Daily Mass
- Daily Holy Hour — NO EXCEPTIONS

Over the next several weeks, I really strived to be faithful to my resolutions. I went to daily Mass and sat alone afterward in front of the tabernacle, opening myself to his voice by reading his word in Sacred Scripture. The current of his presence and his peace began flowing through my soul, and I remember thinking, how could I have

ever lived without this, without this daily communion with him? This is not to say that the hard circumstances of my job — the challenges of first-time teaching and difficulties with my colleague — would not have existed, if only I had been faithful to my relationship with Christ. I knew that the situation itself would not have changed; but if I had taken the time to rest against his Heart in prayer, I would have been strengthened to meet those challenges in peace, confidence, and trust.

I grew to realize that this teaching job had been allowed by Christ the Teacher to utterly convince me of his words, "As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me."

In my pride and naivety, I had never thought that I would compromise my prayer life. Yet there I was, choosing to go at my difficult ministry "by myself" and, to a certain degree, "apart" from him and I had found the joy, peace, love, and life within me rapidly withering away. To my amazement and eventual joy, I saw that my teaching job had not only been beneficial to my ongoing conversion as a catechist and my personal relationship with Jesus Christ . . . it had been necessary. For if we catechists are not convinced — utterly convinced — and living the conviction that apart from him we can do nothing, how can our ministry bear fruit?

As I continue my catechetical work today, my daily communion with Christ remains the lifeblood of all my efforts. Any time I start to grow slack in my commitment to prayer and find excuses to prioritize other things above my daily time with him, I find that I am externally carrying out the responsibilities of my ministry, but my perspective has shifted from doing the Lord's work for the Lord, to doing my work for me. I discover that I become overly concerned with winning the approval of others, discouraged, proud, restless, weary, and afraid of failure. But thankfully, the Lord in his patience does not tire of teaching me the same lesson over and over again. Without him, I can do nothing.

Being a missionary disciple and catechist who prioritizes a deep relationship with Jesus will make us stand out. Sherry Weddell describes such Christians as those who live curiously: "The Catholic life is to be a 'sign of contradiction' in this world [This] means we are to live lives of such inexplicable joy, love, faith, and peace (even in trial) that all the normal categories by which

nonbelievers try to classify us won't work."<sup>4</sup> When such a person is the one forming others in the Faith, curiosity and desire can arise for what the catechist teaches. This curiosity, of course, rarely shows itself in our students immediately, expert as so many are at keeping such things hidden and below the surface. But the more the fruits of the Holy Spirit shine through catechists who live in prayerful communion with God, the more they will wonder what and who it is that makes us different.

An interior life anchored to the Blessed Trinity will sustain perseverance amidst blank stares. It will spark our zeal and renew our smile in the hard moments. It will nourish our faith even as we give it away.

### **PRAYER: A TRANSFORMATIVE ENCOUNTER**

The interior life is something God wants to build in us, with our free cooperation. We might think that the decision to pray originates in our own ideas and our own will; but, in fact, the very desire to pray is itself a gift from God. As it was for Adam and Eve; Abraham; Moses; Zechariah and Elizabeth; and, most of all, the young girl who gave her fiat after receiving the message of an angel, so too does God take the initiative with each of us. When we say "yes" to his invitation, the practice of prayer allows us to develop "the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him" (CCC 2565). Prayer acclimates us — helps us to be "at home" — in communion with God.

It is a preparation for the life of heaven.

How are we to understand the place of prayer in the life of the disciple? What are its essential features? Father Jacques Philippe describes our starting point:

If the life of prayer is not a technique to be mastered but a grace to be received, a gift from God, then talk about prayer should not focus on describing methods or giving instructions, but on explaining the necessary conditions for receiving the gift. These conditions are certain inner attitudes, certain dispositions of the heart. What ensures progress in the life of prayer, what makes it fruitful, is not so much how we pray as our inner dispositions in beginning and continuing it. Our principal task is to try to acquire, keep, and deepen those dispositions of the heart. God will do the rest.<sup>5</sup>

It is important, then, to identify those conditions of the heart that help a life of prayer to flourish. I would like to suggest three such fundamental dispositions.

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<sup>4</sup> Sherry A. Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), 151.

<sup>5</sup> Father Jacques Philippe, *Time for God* (Strongsville, OH: Scepter Publishers, 2008), 7.

## **1) We must expect prayer to be a real encounter with God.**

Many generations of Catholics have grown accustomed to the practice of "saying their prayers" at mealtimes and bedtime. While such a way of conceiving of prayer is helpful without question in developing the discipline of regular prayer, the language employed can be a bit misleading. This is because prayer is not merely something we do. Becoming convicted that prayer is an encounter with God moves our interior focus beyond ourselves, to the Other who wants us to truly encounter him.

Of course, we must acknowledge that many Catholics today need to be persuaded that a real encounter with God is actually possible. According to the 2008 Pew Research Center's US Religious Landscape Survey, "only 48% of Catholics were absolutely certain that the God they believed in was a God with whom they could have a personal relationship."<sup>6</sup> For those with little confidence that God can be known personally, such a predisposition impedes their approach to prayer. Because they have no conviction of being able to know and to be known by the Other, the possibility of encounter diminishes. Therefore, when we teach others about prayer, we should not presume that they already believe prayer can be an encounter with God. Or, if they do already have this confidence, they may never have experienced prayer in this way for themselves. Here is where the catechist's actual experience of knowing the presence of God in prayer is invaluable. When we share our lived experience that God is real and able to be encountered, we can nudge a person toward openness.

Through prayer, our students will make the most important discovery of their lives: the sure knowledge of God's presence. We want them to come to experience the kind of prayer that Saint Teresa of Avila called "contemplation," which she described as "a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us."<sup>7</sup> This closeness with our Father in heaven is the essence of the Christian life. It is communion with the One who loves us.

This is why merely saying our prayers while our minds wander elsewhere — though this is common fare for many of us — is a paltry substitute for the real thing. If we have years of ingrained experience of rote, mindless, mechanical prayer, we can easily miss the enormous potential in this gift God wishes to give us. Each of us must choose to move past previous unhelpful habits of prayer and into the dispositions that lead to encounter and communion. The true and the real in prayer are possible for anyone who attentively seeks.

In this challenge, we might consider the Catechism's encouragement: "It is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer" (CCC 2700). Praying from the

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<sup>6</sup> Cited in Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 44. The last year that this particular question was asked in the Landscape Survey was 2008.

<sup>7</sup> CCC 2709, citing Saint Teresa of Jesus, *The Book of Her Life*, 8, 5 in *The Collected Works of Saint Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD, and Otilio Rodriguez, OCD (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1976), I, 67.

heart begins with calling to mind our deep and profound need for God, our desire to encounter him. It also involves the constant effort of investing ourselves into our vocal prayers, particularly in times of dryness. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux gives an example of this from her experience of prayer: "Sometimes when my mind is in such great aridity that it is impossible to draw forth one single thought to unite me with God, I very slowly recite an 'Our Father' and then the angelic salutation; then these prayers give me great delight; they nourish my soul much more than if I had recited them precipitately a hundred times."<sup>8</sup> Prayers such as these in times of dryness are important to our spiritual life. They express love and faith in God even when we don't feel his presence. Consequently, they are a clear sign that we love God for himself and not for his consolations. While some might presume that prayer from the heart draws principally on the emotions, "the biblical understanding of 'heart' encompasses much more than emotions; it is the seat of our whole being. At that core (from the Latin, *cor*, for 'heart'), where we are most aware of our needs, desires, hopes and fears, God comes to meet us."<sup>9</sup>

Blessed Marie Eugene of the Child Jesus, OCD, an extraordinary twentieth-century spiritual writer, describes this encounter in a way that most of us in this age of screens would find challenging: "Prayer is the movement of our whole self, our person, towards God."<sup>10</sup> For us denizens of the twenty-first century, herein lies the difficulty. For a myriad of reasons, we might find ourselves less and less capable of such a full movement of self today. Armed as we are with powerful technology in our pockets that provides endless streams of information and entertainment as well as the promise of immediate connection with others, we should ask ourselves: How do these technologies form our interior life? How do they affect what we think about? How do they impact our capacity to make this movement of the whole self, which is needed for prayer? For authentic prayer requires the encounter of two who are as fully present as possible to one another, just as any meaningful exchange between human beings does. Our attempts at prayer may resemble the person standing at the edge of the water, skipping rocks. Remaining at the water's edge can be a person's experience of prayer through the whole of life. The disciple of Christ, however, engages the water in a different way — getting into the boat, putting out into deep water, and lowering nets for a catch (Lk 5:4).

Consequently, we should note that the idea of prayer as an encounter places demands upon us. In order for a genuine encounter to be possible, we must be alert and present to God in our prayer so that we can move ourselves toward him. And this requires effort, especially today. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI puts it this way: "We live in a society in which it seems that every space, every moment must be filled' with projects, activities, and noise; there is often no time even to listen or

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<sup>8</sup> Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul: the Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, 3rd ed., trans. John Clark, OCD (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 243 (MsC 25v).

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Siegel, "Part Four: Christian Prayer", in Petroc Willey, Fr. Dominic Scotto, Donald Ascii, and Elizabeth Siegel, *A Year with the Catechism: 365 Day Reading Plan* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2018), 327 (emphasis author's).

<sup>10</sup> Blessed Marie Eugene of the Child Jesus, *Where the Spirit Breathes: Prayer and Action*, trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, OP (New York: Alba House, 1988), 53.

to converse. Dear brothers and sisters, let us not fear to create silence, within and outside ourselves, if we wish to be able not only to become aware of God's voice but also to make out the voice of the person beside us, the voices of others."<sup>11</sup> Most of us know well this battle to prioritize silence, leisure, real connection with others, and to live with technology in a balanced way. One youth minister trenchantly describes the challenges of social media in this way:

The affirmation and attention that a "like" gives can be a tangible way to fill an ache for communion that is meant to be satisfied by authentic relationships with friends, family, and the Lord. We may regularly complain about the way we see our students turning to social media instead of "real life," yet adults are also vulnerable and can use social media to numb the ache of loneliness that can lead us to call a friend, go on a date, or invest in personal prayer time.<sup>12</sup>

To move our whole selves toward God requires that we seek out silence. For most of us today, this will require that we periodically deny our ingrained inclination to reach for technology to fill moments of silence as they occur. Robert Cardinal Sarah sets before us the way forward, asking, "How can we come to master our own interior silence? The only answer lies in asceticism, self-renunciation, and humility. If man does not mortify himself, if he stays as he is, he remains outside of God."<sup>13</sup> Time away from screens and devices is more and more a requirement for the Christian serious about developing his life in Christ so that he can live for others. Prayer is a real encounter that requires as complete an investment of ourselves as we can muster.

Let's turn now to a second important disposition for fruitful prayer.

## **2) We must incline ourselves to both receive and give in prayer.**

Above all else, prayer is a personal exchange with God. Prayer is an encounter with God, but it is not just any encounter. Prayer puts us into contact with the God who is love (1 Jn 4:16), who is eternal self-gift. We make our hearts present to God in prayer, because this is the only fitting posture for an encounter with the One who is the very ground of love. Prayer, in its essence, is an exchange of love. For prayer to be this, we must learn two abilities: first, that of attentive receptivity to what God wishes to give; second, we must intentionally make a gift of ourselves to God in how we pray.

Cardinal Sarah highlights the example of Martha and Mary in their encounter with Jesus. While many have interpreted the story as a promotion of the contemplative life (seen in Mary's sitting at

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<sup>11</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, "Homily for Eighth Centenary of the Birth of Pope Celestine V," July 4, 2010, in Robert Cardinal Sarah with Nicolas Diat, *The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017), 27.

<sup>12</sup> Alison Blanchet, "Modern Man Listens More to Witnesses than to Tweeters," *The Catechetical Review* 5, no. 2 (April 2019): 38.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah with Nicolas Diat, *The Power of Silence*, 51.

the feet of Jesus) over the active (picture Martha's frustrated busyness preparing the meal), Cardinal Sarah points out that what we do for Jesus, what we give to him (Martha) is not to be avoided, but it must be preceded by silence and receptivity to what he wishes to give (Mary). Martha's problem — and sometimes ours as we give to the Lord as catechists — was not that she was preparing the meal, but that she was doing this good work with "an inattentive interior attitude." Jesus then "invites her to stop so as to return to her heart, the place of true welcome and the dwelling place of God's silent tenderness, from which she had been led away by the activity to which she was devoting herself so noisily."<sup>14</sup> This insight is profoundly relevant to every person who seeks God in prayer. For each of us, prayer must first be receptive. We must attune ourselves to what God gives — his grace, his wisdom, his word, his quiet clarity, and, at times, even the feeling of his absence.

As there is a downward movement to prayer, from God to us, so too is there an upward movement.<sup>15</sup> We also give something. And while we give our time, our sacrifices, our worship, and our petitions to the Lord in prayer, the gift that he most desires is the gift of our very selves, a gift that is the very essence of love. Saint Teresa of Ávila writes that, in prayer, "the important thing is not to think much but to love much; and so do that which best stirs you to love. Perhaps we don't know what love is. I wouldn't be very surprised, because it doesn't consist in great delight but in desiring with strong determination to please God in everything."<sup>16</sup> Loving God is ultimately a gift focused toward him rather than being about us. While some think the reason for prayer is self-fulfillment, inner peace, or a deeper joy, the disciple prays first in order to love God. Other fruits may indeed come from prayer, but Christian prayer is ultimately focused away from ourselves, as being for the other as an act of self-giving love.

Blessed Columba Marmion, OSB, also helps us understand the gift we give to God in prayer. For Marmion, prayer is a "conversation of a child of God with its Heavenly Father, to adore him, to praise him, to say 'I love you' to him, to learn to know his will and to obtain from him the help that is necessary to do that will."<sup>17</sup> In other words, no matter the particular form our prayer takes, the praying person is Other-focused, directing mind, heart, and will in a posture of self-giving toward God. Most important is that we gather together our gift of self — in our aspirations, words, postures, sacrifices — as an upward gift. We must join ourselves to our words and gestures, so that they truly represent us. The more we are able to pray from our hearts in this way, the more our prayer takes on the quality of a gift. This kind of prayer opens up great potential within us as we seek union with God.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 27-28

<sup>15</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, OSB describes the place of these two movements in the liturgy, and they will be explained more fully in the next chapter. See Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, *What Happens at Mass*, revised edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011), 10.

<sup>16</sup> Teresa of Jesus, *The Interior Castle*, IV:1 in *The Collected Works of Saint Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD, and Otilio Rodriguez, OCD (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980), II, 319.

<sup>17</sup> Blessed Columba Marmion, *Christ the Life of the Soul* (Bethesda, MD: Zaccheus Press, 2005), 417.

### **3) Finally, we must expect to be changed through prayer.**

Such a loving exchange is meant to transform us, to conform us more and more to the One who is our model of holiness and charity.

I won't forget the April day when I was getting ready to leave my apartment to take an exam for which I did not feel adequately prepared. As I was hurrying around, gathering my things, I asked my wife to pray for me, because I felt I needed a miracle to be able to do well. As I was opening the door to leave for the university, the phone rang, and the call was for me. I picked up the receiver and was stunned to hear my professor's voice on the other end of the line, informing me that because of the serious winter storm that had just hit, the exam was canceled; instead, students were to turn in a paper. I had barely noticed the snow that was steadily coming down, particularly because in my experience of living in the Midwest, it never snowed much in late April. What joy and relief I felt with such an immediate response to my wife's (clearly very powerful) prayers!

How many times do we approach the Lord in prayer, asking him to change something — a person, a bad habit, a feared outcome, or some difficult circumstance? Prayers such as these are important, and the Lord himself encourages frequent and persistent prayers of petition (e.g., Mt 7:7; Mt 628-34; Jn 14:13). But our prayers regarding some difficulty God has allowed in our life never change God's mind. His intent with these prayers is quite different: He wants our experience of prayer to change us. And if we are able, even just sometimes, to enter into the receiving and giving of love through prayer, we cannot avoid being changed.

Through prayer, our intentions and desires are purified, healed, elevated, and conformed to the divine will. Experienced catechist Elizabeth Siegel explains:

When we think God does not hear our prayers, our faith is being tested. God wants our relationship with him to be authentic, and not based solely on our desire to get something from him. If we are willing, he purifies us from this selfish love towards a love of God simply for who he is. ... The fact that our prayer does not go the way we intend does not mean that God is absent. God is always at work in our sincere prayer, he is always seeking our good, he is always bringing us to salvation, and he is always preparing us to receive the riches he has for us.<sup>18</sup>

Christian prayer, then, is a personal encounter with God. As we receive and give; we enter into a divine way of loving. And immersion in the life of God is meant to change us, to sanctify us, to make us gradually more like the One whom we follow as disciples.

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Siegel, "Part Four: Christian Prayer," in Petroc Willey et al., *A Year with the Catechism*, 355.

## **PRAYER: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CATECHIST**

Our life of prayer is meant to create within us a deep reservoir of living water. This overflowing water then sustains us in our own life with Christ and in our work as catechists. It is important to note that prayer does not always remove difficulties; rather, it is how we cling to God, particularly in our weakness and in the face of difficulties.

Teresa Hawes from Vermont is a professed member of the Notre Dame de Vie secular institute initially founded in France. As a member of this institute, in addition to the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, Teresa has made the additional commitment to spend two hours in silent prayer each day, allowing her apostolate of teaching to flow out of her life with God. Teresa shares an experience she had of allowing prayer to be the source for her catechetical work:

One Saturday morning I was preparing to lead a prayer group that evening. The Bible, the Catechism, other reference books and notes were spread out before me. I don't remember the specific topic, but I do remember that I had been carrying it in daily prayer for quite some time, trying to knit together a teaching that would nourish the avid souls in this group. That morning, nothing seemed to fit anywhere, and I was overcome with utter helplessness. The meeting was only a few hours away, and I felt completely incompetent and at a loss, unable to say anything good, true, or beautiful. I even called the priest who mentored this group, telling him he would have to teach that evening as I was useless. He laughed at me, said some encouraging words and hung up. There I was amidst my mess of books and papers — all I could do was close my eyes and ask Mother Mary to help me surrender everything to Our Lord. After some quiet time in prayer, I took up the thread of the talk again; a way to sort out the messy knot of references and thoughts started to become clear. The "peace surpassing all understanding" settled into my heart, and the talk did turn out well.

Since then, a similar experience of powerlessness has become my usual lot at some point prior to any catechetical lesson or presentation. I recognize and welcome it now as a good sign: The Holy Spirit wants me to get out of the way, detaching myself from my preparation, trusting him to take the reins. "Without me you can do nothing," Jesus taught. Yet, he also commissioned us to be his witnesses even to the ends of the earth. How is that possible? I remember that Therese of the Child Jesus found an answer when she was asked to teach the novices, trusting Jesus to give her what they

needed. She also shared that inspiration did not come during her two hours of silent prayer, but afterward, as she journeyed through daily life. That has been my little experience, too: The Holy Spirit uses the receptive qualities that are given to us in our baptismal grace [cf. CCC 1830] to intervene directly in our prayer and in our action in the midst of our ordinary, daily lives. We often feel the opposite of the grace we are receiving,<sup>19</sup> which explains my impression of utter helplessness. Plus, prideful as I am, I probably would not have the humility to get out of the way, trust, and surrender if I was not backed into a corner by this experience of weakness. Praised be Jesus who awaits my act of faith, strengthened in prayer, to use me as his instrument, as he wills.

Wherever we are now in our commitment to prayer, there is always room to grow. As we conclude this chapter, let's consider five simple ways we can deepen the reservoir from which we draw our spiritual nourishment as catechists.

### **1) Turn up the silence.**

A first step is simply to introduce more silence into daily life. Exterior silence creates the capacity for interior silence, which is the prerequisite for real prayer. Cardinal Sarah writes:

No prophet ever encountered God without withdrawing into solitude and silence. Moses, Elijah, and John the Baptist encountered God in the great silence of the desert. Today, too, monks seek God in solitude and silence. I am speaking, not just about a geographical solitude or movement, but about an interior state. It is not enough to be quiet, either. It is necessary to become silence. For, even before the desert, the solitude, and the silence, God is already in man. The true desert is within us, in our soul. Strengthened with this knowledge, we can understand how silence is indispensable if we are to find God. The Father waits for his children in their own hearts.<sup>20</sup>

So, take a quiet walk every day. Spend time in silence before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Turn off the music or the podcast on your commute to work. Arrive ten minutes early to Mass. Sit quietly before going to bed. Taking steps toward God in silence will increase our capacities for prayer.

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<sup>19</sup> Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus, OCD, *I Want to See God: A Practical Synthesis of Carmelite Spirituality*, vol. 1, trans. Sr. M. Verda Clare, CSC (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, 1953), 338-60. See especially 353-54, where Blessed Marie-Eugene explains this negative experience and why it is the most constant and authentic sign of God's action.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah with Nicolas Diat, *The Power of Silence*, 23.

## **2) Identify naturally recurring opportunities for prayer, which will help prayer become a regular (and difficult-to-forget) habit.**

I was recently struck by the habit of someone who described how important it has been for him to make room on his bedside table for a crucifix. Every morning when he first wakes, he reaches for the crucifix, so that his first conscious movement of the day is to raise his mind and heart to God rather than reaching for his iPhone to check messages.

I started off fatherhood convinced of my responsibility to pray for my children. Yet, I had a hard time remembering to do so with any real consistency. An idea learned in observing another family has been valuable for me. As I had seen them do, I trace the sign of the cross on our children's foreheads as part of our bedtime ritual. Over the years, that simple habit of blessing has developed into a time of silent prayer over each of the girls every night. They're used to it. I'm used to it. And it's a way for me, without fail, to pray for each of them individually every night. My friend Sean prays a Rosary every day, and years ago he started praying it for one of his family members each day of the week. Thanks to this ritual, it has become automatic to pray specifically for one family member each day. My wife used to pray Hail Marys for her elementary school students as they filed into the room before each class. It was a great source of peace and strength for her teaching. When prayer becomes a habit, we become intentional and consistent, thereby bringing infinite good into our lives and those of the people we lift up in this way.

As catechists, we might ask ourselves: Where are the natural hook moments in our daily routine that can help us intercede more consistently for those we teach? Perhaps we can develop the habit of praying for them as we drive to and from our meeting place, or at the beginning of our lesson-planning time, or before the tabernacle upon our arrival at the church. A public school teacher who is a Christian once described how he would arrive early to school each day and sit in the desks of each of his students, quietly praying for each one's needs before they arrived to school.

Find those recurring moments in daily life that can be intentionally dedicated to prayer. By forming these habits, praying for those entrusted to us for catechesis becomes a consistent practice, even amidst the busyness of life. Praying regularly on behalf of our students will increase the possibilities for grace to move in them inside and outside the classroom. It will also help us into an authentic way of generous love for those we teach.

## **3) Pray with Scripture.**

As our specific mission revolves around the proclamation and teaching of the word of God, Scripture ought to occupy an important position in our personal prayer. Reading and praying with God's word is a way to meet the Lord and to immerse ourselves in his way of seeing, thinking, and living.

In the catechist's spiritual life, there is no substitute for soaking in the content of the Gospels. Our reading of these texts, however, should not be undertaken in the usual ways we read books. Many

saints through the centuries have shown how to read Scripture in ways aligned with its nature as Divine Revelation: by allowing it to lead us to silence, to deep reflection, to a responsiveness to what we read, and to a commitment to conform ourselves to the One who speaks to us through the text.

These important elements are each seen in *lectio divina*, a particularly profound way of pondering the Scriptures. *Lectio divina* (literally, "divine reading") is an ancient monastic practice of prayerfully reading Scripture in such a way that we seek to encounter God. Rather than reading many passages at a time, when we do *lectio divina* we instead engage a shorter selection, seeking to truly "take in" the Scripture, attentive and responsive to what God is saying to us personally. The passage is prayerfully read three or four times — each time with a distinct intention — so that we might focus ourselves on the text. First, we read the passage aloud (*lectio*), slowly and reverently, attentive to particular words or phrases that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention. We might consider reading it again silently with the same observant disposition. Next, we meditate on the passage (*meditatio*) and, in particular, those words that were brought to mind. The objective here is to spend time pondering, prayerfully engaging the particular words and phrases that caught our attention, working to take God's word to heart. The last step is to make a prayerful, personal response to God for what has been received in the time of prayer (*oratio*). We might consider writing down what especially struck us in our reflection. We respond here to God with words of gratitude and praise, or perhaps with questions that have arisen in our prayer, or a petition for healing, or a specific resolution for change.

A special grace can be received as a gift from God during our time of prayer — that of contemplation (*contemplatio*). This is the serene experience of just being with God, resting in his loving presence. As my friend and colleague Deacon Stephen Miletic, PhD, describes it, "There is an overwhelming awareness that, for example, every molecule in the room is replete with the Divine Presence, an experience of great and deep peace that is seemingly 'uncaused' by anything we do or have done. One does not arrive at contemplation from doing steps 1 to 3 properly, from fasting, ascetical practices, etc. It arrives when God deems it necessary to assist us in this way.

Another scriptural discipline that can sustain us is reading and praying in advance with the Sunday Mass readings. Not only will we come to know God's word more deeply, but this practice also prepares us to more actively and consciously receive God's word as it is proclaimed in the liturgy.

#### **4) Pray in a way that strengthens the connection between faith and life.**

The 1993 "Guide for Catechists" suggests that the prayer of catechists should lead to a "coherence and authenticity of life." A catechist's prayer life should involve "their whole being. Before they preach the word, they must make it their own and live by it."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the prayer of a catechist should not be a purely ethereal exercise that is not related to life. Prayer is important to integrating

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<sup>21</sup> Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, "Guide for Catechists", Vatican.va, art. 8.

the Faith in how we live, sanctifying every aspect of our experience. This is, of course, especially important for those who form others in the Christian life.

For instance, ending each day with an examination of conscience is essential to making progress in holiness of life, keeping us attuned to our need for God's mercy. In his classic book, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Saint Francis de Sales recommends four steps to this examination:

1. We give thanks to God for having kept us during the past day.
2. We examine how we conducted ourselves throughout the whole course of the day. To do so more easily, we may reflect on where, with whom, and in what work we have been engaged.
3. If we find that we have done any good, we must thank God for it. On the other hand, if we have done anything wrong in thought, word, or deed, we must ask pardon of his Divine Majesty with a resolution to confess it at the first opportunity and to make careful amendment for it.
4. After this, we recommend to God's providence our body and soul, the Church, our relatives, and friends. We beg our Lady, our guardian angel, and the saints to watch over us and for us.<sup>22</sup>

Regularly examining ourselves deepens our personal conversion, helping us to grow in faith, hope, and charity, which transforms our disposition toward God and other people.

We can exercise our baptismal priesthood when we offer up our experiences in life as loving, sacrificial gifts to God. This practice sanctifies the whole of daily life — our struggles in suffering and little defeats, but also our joys and our victories. The Church tells us that every experience of ordinary life is worthy of being offered out of love to God: "For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne — all these become 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' [1 Pt 2:5]. Together with the offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist" (*Lumen Gentium*, 34).

Giving every aspect of life as a sacrifice to God in love (to include our physical and mental relaxation) is the way of divine love and is our priestly work for the sanctification of the world.

## **6) Pray while you teach.**

I was always taken aback by one of my theology professors, who used to teach with rosary beads in his hand. Watching closely, I soon realized that his fingers were slowly moving from bead to bead as he taught. While such an ability to do two complex things at the same time eludes me, I do intentionally follow the advice of Saint Teresa of Calcutta on how to pray in daily life. She

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<sup>22</sup> Saint Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 95-96.

wrote, "You can pray while you work. Work doesn't stop prayer and prayer doesn't stop work. It requires only that small raising of the mind to him: 'I love you God, I trust you, I believe in you, I need you now.' Small things like that. They are wonderful prayers."<sup>23</sup> I have found this way of prayer so practically helpful: Through the ebbs and flows of teaching, short darts of the heart toward the Lord keep me oriented to him and open to his inspirations: "Be with us, Lord! Give me the words! Help us respond to you! Wake up that kid in the back row!"

I have also known teachers who, when studying a particularly challenging teaching or seemingly incredible account from the Gospels, stop teaching to turn to God with the students.

"Lord, this is hard to grasp. We know we are standing before a great mystery here. Open our eyes to your way of seeing!" Such a "prayer break" can make a strong impression on participants, teaching them the quintessential posture of the disciple before the mysteries contained in Scripture.

Prayer is both our lifeline and our reservoir. It is a life of intimate communion with God, who loves us infinitely. A commitment to prayer not only brings us into the life and love of God, but it also empowers our teaching and our conversations with those we teach. We simply cannot do without it and hope to be fruitful in our work for the Lord.

**Reflect on what you have read.**

**How could the attitudes and practices developed here contribute to my profession and practice as a catechist?**

**How could these practices contribute to our catechism's culture as a community within a community faith?"** (Directory for Catechesis, 301)

We invite you to spend 7 minutes in silent contemplation, listening for God's voice, ideally near the physical presence of God in Adoration or near your church or chapel's tabernacle. Relax. Rest in the presence of your Creator and simply allow God to gaze on you, His beloved. Recall how dear you are to Him, and how much God desires to accompany you on this journey.

**Briefly respond to the two questions on the next page, record a revelation or inspiration received, or simply write "Completed" after your meditation.**

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<sup>23</sup> Mother Teresa, quoted in Jaya Chalika and Edward Le Joly, eds., *The Joy in Loving: A Guide to Daily Living* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 73.

If you are a parish catechist in Nelson Diocese pursuing CORNERSTONE certification (and not the MiniTrack), email a copy of this completed page with your pastor's signature to the Nelson Diocese Office of Faith Formation at [faithformation@nelsondiocese.org](mailto:faithformation@nelsondiocese.org) to receive a **FREE** copy of James Pauley's book, *An Evangelizing Catechesis*.

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish, City: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please note if your pastor is also your mentor.)*

What personal practice of prayer do I already find most beneficial for me? For my students?

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Saint Bernard of Clairvaux encourages us to be *reservoirs* and not channels. Is my daily prayer practice up to this challenge? What, if anything, did I find in this chapter which can help me fill my reservoir to overflowing?

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God sent the angel Gabriel to a young woman in Nazareth, “And coming to her, he said, ‘Hail, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.” (Luke 1: 28-29)

We understand Mary to be our model of devout faith and trust in God, who steadfastly accompanied Jesus, her son, from conception to death, to resurrection and ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. And still, at the announcement of God's angel she is *troubled and contemplates* these events in the stillness of her heart. **THIS IS PRAYER.** Our connection to God who loves us.

Should you decide to pursue this orientation further, begin by recognizing *this education is different than any other you have attempted*. It is your invitation into a deeper, more meaningful connection with God our Creator; Jesus, your Saviour and mine; and the infinite help of the Holy Spirit who inspires and animates every good work.

Catechism is not simply an academic endeavour of the parish; it is a centre of life and learning, fertile soil for the seeds of sainthood and the redemption of every human person — a community within our community of faith.

Just like Mary, as I work to build up my foundation in faith — and it is work — there are times I may be troubled by what I hear or experience. Embrace this feeling. This can be the discomfort of my status quo crumbling - the active formation of good conscience — on earth, a forever work in progress.

Faith walks hand in hand with reason. There is no service to justice or peace which the Church with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit cannot help you uncover, if you commit now to seek that understanding with an open heart. Go to the dark corners, challenge what you know and don't know about God and Church and, through prayer, invite Jesus to accompany you.

Finally, God's plan is communal. We each receive gifts and insights intended for ourselves and others. Mary received God's good news and set out, with haste, to visit her relative Elizabeth. With the help of friends and colleagues, your priest or spiritual mentor, the RE coordinator or fellow catechists, or the diocesan office of faith formation, seek out companions for your journey. Consider including your students in areas of discovery which engage you!

May God bless you and sustain you  
and may the prayers of Mother Mary accompany you  
as you seek to encounter God in all that is true, good, and beautiful.

Amen.

## Appendix 4 – Chapter 62 “Prayers: The Our Father”, *Echoing the Mystery*



For catechists unsure of their own adult understanding of the Catholic faith, *Echoing the Mystery* by Barbara Morgan and Sr. Athanasius Munroe, OP, can be a great shortcut.

This book pulls together all aspects of a theme, including essential points, Scripture and Catechism references, art and music, and ties to virtue and divine perspectives.

Answers to many popular questions, and potential hooks for classroom conversations, can be found in the ***Common Errors*** section of each theme. This brief section also provides a

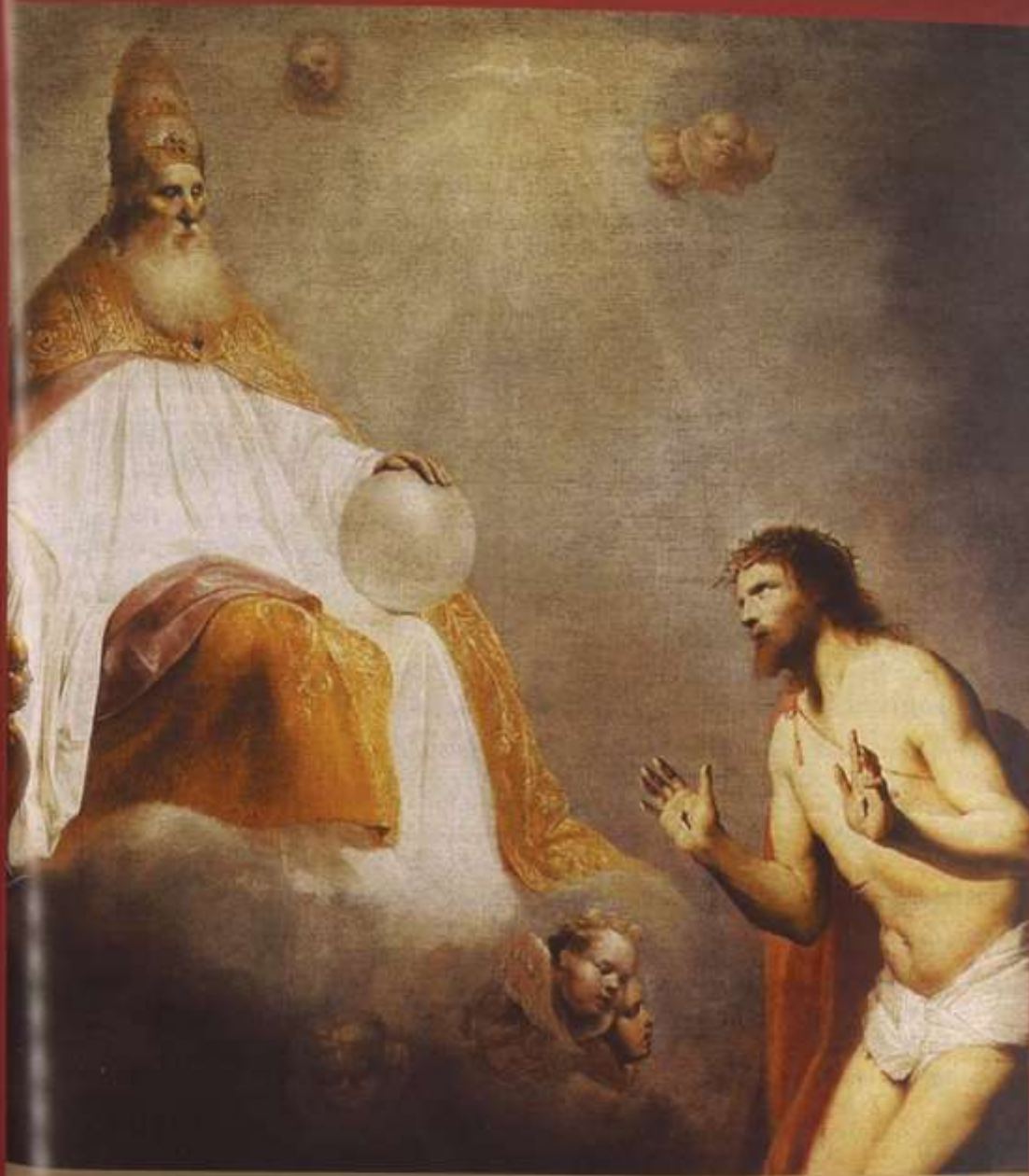
great health-check for our own beliefs, highlighting areas where our exposure to secular ideas about what Catholics believe may have been unintentionally absorbed into our own understanding.

The book is published by Lumen Ecclesiae Press and can sometimes be difficult to source. Check with your pastor or RE coordinator to see if your parish already has a copy, or contact the diocesan Office of Faith Formation for assistance and subsidized pricing for parishes.

More sample chapters and the table of contents can be viewed on the Nelson Diocese website Coordinators page – [www.nelsondiocese.org](http://www.nelsondiocese.org) Faith Formation > Coordinators > Catechist Corner.

User ID: coordinator

Password: comeHolySpirit



*By teaching us to pray the Our Father, Jesus shows us the opportunity of freely participating in the accomplishment of the Father's loving plan. Through it, we abandon ourselves wholly to the Spirit of the Son, enter fully into the new life He wants to give us, and conform our wills to His plan.*

# 62

## Prayer: The Our Father

### Divine Perspective

By teaching us to pray the Our Father, Jesus shows us the opportunity of freely participating in the accomplishment of the Father's loving plan. Through it, we abandon ourselves wholly to the Spirit of the Son, enter fully into the new life He wants to give us, and conform our wills to His plan.

PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN

#### TRINITY

Jesus teaches us to pray to the Father in the Holy Spirit. We enter into communion with the Trinity through prayer, and by it, God draws us toward the completion of His plan of salvation: our full and definitive entrance into the glory of His Trinitarian communion in heaven. Prayer teaches us to commune with God, preparing us for heaven.

#### CHURCH

The Our Father can only be prayed within the communion of the Church. It bids us to leave aside all selfish individualism and to be bound together as one in love.

#### PASCHAL MYSTERY

By His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, The Son won for us the graces of victory over the evil one and of adoption as sons. Seated at the Father's right hand in glory, He intercedes for us. The Our Father associates us with the prayers of His Passion "Thy will be done!" and "Father, forgive them!"



#### DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The Our Father teaches us to approach God with the dignity of His children. By it, we help hasten the coming of His kingdom and bring about His will, which He has made dependent on our prayers.

### Theological Virtues (AIMS OF INSTRUCTION)

"By the three first petitions, we are strengthened in faith, filled with hope, and set aflame by charity. Being creatures and still sinners, we have to petition for us, for that "us" bound by the world and history, which we offer to the boundless love of God. For through the name of his Christ and the reign of his Holy Spirit, our Father accomplishes his plan of salvation, for us and for the whole world" (CCC 2806).

### Scripture and Essentials

#### 1) JESUS GAVE US THE OUR FATHER AS THE MEANS OF ENTERING INTO A FILIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND OF ASKING FOR THE GRACE NECESSARY TO EMBARK ON THE NEW LIFE OF ADOPTED SONS. IN IT WE FIND SUMMARIZED THE WHOLE OF THE GOSPEL AND THE FATHER'S PLAN OF SALVATION.



✦ **Gal 4:4-7** - God sent His Son to redeem us and the Spirit of sonship into our hearts.

✦ **Mt 5:44-45. 48** - Be perfect as your Father is perfect.

✦ **2 Cor 1:20** - All the promises of God find their "Amen" in Christ. We utter "Amen" through Him.

CCC 2781, 2784, 2785, 2865

*Scripture for further study*

- We receive divine adoption through Christ's redemptive work and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. This is the basis on which we call on God as "Our Father."

• *Gal 4:4-7 - God sent His Son to redeem us and the Spirit of sonship into our hearts.*

- We pray for the grace we need to live the new life of the Gospel in the Our Father. Our life is conformed to our prayer when we:

- Desire and strive to become like the Father;
- Develop the trusting and loving heart of a child.

- Our "Amen" then ratifies our whole acceptance of God's plan of salvation. We say "Amen" ("so be it") to all that He has revealed and worked.

◦ *1 Cor 15:10 - By the grace of God I am what I am.*

◦ *Mt 5:44-45, 48 - Be perfect as your Father is perfect.*

◦ *Eph 3:12 - In Christ we have confident access to the Father.*

◦ *Mt 18:3-4 - We must become like children to enter the kingdom.*

◦ *2 Cor 1:20 - We utter "Amen" through Christ.*

## 2) BY GIVING US THE OUR FATHER, JESUS DRAWS US INTO THE RADICALLY NEW RELATIONSHIP INTO WHICH HE INTRODUCES US BY DIVINE ADOPTION.



✦ **Eph 1:3-6** - The Father makes us His adopted sons through Christ.

✦ **Rom 8:14-17** - We receive the Spirit of sonship.

✦ **Mt 6:9-13** - Pray then like this, "Our Father..."

CCC 2776, 2783, 2787, 2792, 2795

— Scripture for further study —

- God reveals that He is, above all, "Father" to us.
  - God is Father as no one else is. Even our best images of fatherhood must be purified, so that we can receive what the Son wishes to reveal to us about the Father.
  - Through the grace of adoption, the Spirit gives us a share in the Son's relationship with the Father. We pray in communion with Him.
  - We approach Him in Christ with trust, humility, and boldness, at His own command.
  - The Our Father teaches us the right order in which to ask for the graces necessary for living in this relationship with the Father.
- By telling us to call Him "our Father," God highlights our new relationship as His family, in which the Church's members belong to one another.
  - We belong to God as His people and His family. We belong to Him, and not He to us.
  - We pray with the whole Church whenever we pray the Our Father.

◦ *Eph 1:3-6 - The Father makes us His adopted sons through Christ.*

◦ *Eph 3:14-15 - From the Father, every family on earth is named.*

◦ *Rom 8:14-17 - We receive the Spirit of sonship.*

◦ *Heb 10:20-22 - Let us draw near with hearts full of assurance.*

◦ *Heb 4:16 - Let us draw near the throne of grace with confidence.*

◦ *Jas 4:3-8 - You ask but do not receive because you ask wrongly.*

◦ *1 Cor 12:25 - We are all members of one another.*

◦ *Phil 2:1-4 - Look out for the interests of others.*

◦ *Ps 100:1 - We are His people.*

- God's love has no bounds. Likewise, our prayers include all of His children.
  - *Mt 5:23-24* - Be reconciled with your brother before offering sacrifice.
  - *Mt 5:44* - Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
- The Church, as the family of God, prays the Our Father whenever she gathers together.
  - *Acts 2:42* - The Church devoted herself to the prayers.
  - It appears as the prayer of the whole Church in each of the sacramental rites.
  - In the rites of Baptism and Confirmation, we receive the Our Father, signifying our new birth into divine adoption.
  - It is prayed during the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Heaven—the place where the Father dwells—is in our hearts whenever we turn to Him by conversion.
  - *Isa 57:15* - God dwells in heaven and with the humble.

### 3) LOVE THINKS FIRST OF THE ONE LOVED. BY THE FIRST THREE PETITIONS, WE SEEK FIRST THE FATHER'S KINGDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND GLORY.



- ✦ **Mt 6:33** - But seek first His kingdom and his righteousness.
- ✦ **Eph 1:4** - He chose us to be holy and blameless before Him.
- ✦ **Heb 12:28** - We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
- ✦ **Heb 10:7-10** - Christ says, "I have come to do Your will."
- ✦ **Rom 12:1-2** - Be transformed that you may know what is God's will.

CCC 2807, 2814, 2818, 2825

- By asking that God's name be made holy, we ask that He make us holy, since we bear His name.
  - After the fall, God sanctifies man and restores the divine likeness by revealing His name to man.
    - *Ex 3:13-15* - God reveals His name to Moses.
  - Jesus fully reveals the Father's name by His sacrifice.
    - *Jn 17:6, 26* - I have made known Your name.
  - Baptized in His name, the hallowing of His name in the world depends on our life and our prayer. We beg Him to make us holy.
    - *Isa 36:22-28* - Israel profaned God's name by sin, and God promised them a new heart and new spirit.
    - *Eph 1:4* - He chose us to be holy and blameless before Him.
- We beg God to hasten the coming of His reign by His return in glory.
  - *1 Cor 15:24* - Last of all, Christ hands over the kingdom.
  - *Heb 12:28* - We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

- By His action in history and through the Church, the Spirit advances the coming of the kingdom. By grace, He forms Christ in us.
  - *Mt 5:3 - Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
  - *Rom 14:17 - The kingdom is a matter of righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit.*
  - *Mk 10:14 - Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*
- God's reign in us means we must be pure of heart, free of slavery to sin.
  - *1 Cor 6:9-12 - The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom.*
- The petition "Thy kingdom come" commits us to striving for the justice God wills in all our relationships.
  - *1 Cor 4:20 - The kingdom consists not in talk but in power.*
  - *2 Pet 1:10-11 - Be zealous to confirm your call, and your entry to the kingdom will be richly provided for.*
- God has made known to us the mystery of His will. We ask insistently that this loving plan be realized fully on earth, as it already is in heaven.
  - *Eph 1:9-10 - He has made known the mystery of His will.*
  - Jesus' prayer is, "Lo, I have come to do Your will!"
    - *Jn 6:38-40 - The Son does the Father's will.*
    - *Heb 10:7-10 - Christ says, "I have come to do Your will."*
  - United to this prayer of Christ, we are true sons in the Son when we surrender our wills to the Father for the salvation of the world.
    - *Mt 12:50, 7:21 - Whoever does My Father's will is My brother.*
    - *Mt 18:14 - It is not the Father's will that one of these little ones should perish.*
  - As adopted sons, we are incapable of doing this on our own. We need the Father to transform us by the Spirit's power so that we can seek what is pleasing to Him.
    - *Rom 12:1-2 - Be transformed that you may know what is God's will.*
    - *Heb 13:20-21 - May God equip you with everything good to do His will.*

#### 4) THE POVERTY OF OUR BEING IS EXPRESSED IN THE LAST FOUR PETITIONS, BY WHICH WE ENTRUST OUR MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS TO THE FATHER, KNOWING HE CARES FOR US.

- ☛ **Phil 4:6-7** - Have no anxiety; make your requests known.
- ☛ **1 Cor 10:13** - God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength.
- ☛ **Eph 6:10-13** - Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to withstand the devil's strong attacks.
- ☛ **Mt 18:23-35** - The unmerciful servant.

CCC 2830, 2833, 2834, 2837, 2842, 2843, 2847, 2849

— Scripture for further study —

- We look to the Father as the source of all life, and, with trust, abandon our needs to His providence.
  - *Lk 12:29-31 - The Father knows your needs.*
  - By teaching us to ask Him for our daily bread, God invites us to freedom from anxiety, while teaching us to cooperate with His providence.
    - *Phil 4:6-7 - Have no anxiety; make your requests known.*

- When we work, we remember all we receive from our labors is His gift.
  - By giving out of our abundance to others who lack what they need, we give others their due. We ask not just for "my" daily bread, but for "our."
- We share all we have, spiritual and material, in the Church, so that it belongs to all of us.
  - We pray to receive the Eucharist, the daily bread of life.
- Having forfeited our inheritance by sin, we turn to the Father for forgiveness and ask Him to enable us to imitate His mercy.
    - Love is indivisible. We cannot love God and close ourselves to our neighbor.
      - God's love and forgiveness knows no bounds.
      - God's forgiveness only penetrates our hearts when we forgive others.
      - We know our debt to His mercy is greater than anything we can hold against another.
    - When we forgive, we become like the merciful Father and like Christ, who forgave from the Cross.
    - Forgiving lies in an act of the will, not in the emotions.
      - The Holy Spirit purifies the memory of the offense and transforms the pain into intercession.
      - We may still feel the pain the offense caused us, but it calls us to prayer for the offender.
  - We beg for the Spirit of discernment and strength when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation."
    - In this petition, Christ unites us to His battle of prayer and victory over the tempter. Victory over temptation comes through vigilance in prayer.
    - We ask for strength in our struggle against our own weakness and evil inclinations.

◦ *1 Thess 4:11 - Work with your hands.*

◦ *Phil 2:12-13 - Work out your salvation, for God is at work in you.*

◦ *Eph 4:28 - Let the thief work, so as to be able to give to those in need.*

◦ *Eph 2:9-10 - We are His workmanship.*

◦ *Lk 15:18-21 - I have sinned against heaven and against You.*

◦ *Mt 18:23-35 - The Unmerciful Servant*

◦ *1 Pet 4:7-8 - Love covers a multitude of sins.*

◦ *Lk 7:39-47 - He who is forgiven much loves much.*

◦ *Lk 17:4 - You must forgive the one who sins against you seven times in a day.*

◦ *Mt 26:28 - This is the blood of the covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sins.*

◦ *Lk 23:34 - Father, forgive them!*

◦ *Col 3:12-15 - Forbear and forgive, bearing patiently with one another.*

◦ *2 Cor 2:10-11 - I forgive to keep Satan from gaining a foothold.*

◦ *Eph 4:26-27 - Do not let the sun go down on your anger*

◦ *Jas 1:12-15 - Trials prepare us for the crown of life; temptations are the fruit of sinful passions.*

◦ *Mt 4:1 - Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*

◦ *1 Cor 10:13 - God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength.*

◦ *Heb 4:15-16 - He was tested, like us in every way but sin.*

- We must discern between trials and temptations.
  - ◆ Temptations lead to sin and death and present us with a choice that seems desirable at first, but is contrary to the true good.
    - *Jas 1:12-15 - Trials prepare us for the crown of life; temptations are the fruit of sinful passions.*
  - ◆ Trials help us to grow in strength and maturity. They conform us to Christ.
    - *Jas 1:2-4 - Count it all joy when you suffer various trials.*
- In the final petition, we pray for the deliverance of the whole body of Christ from the devil, who seeks to thwart God's plan.
  - *1 Pet 4:8-11 - The devil goes about as a roaring lion. These trials lead us to glory.*
- Jesus won for us victory over the devil by His obedience to death.
  - *Heb 2:14-15 - Jesus destroyed the devil.*
  - *1 Jn 3:8 - Jesus appeared to destroy the works of the devil.*
- We pray to share Christ's victory and to be delivered from all evils, which are the devil's work.
  - *Jas 4:7 - Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*
- We pray for perseverance in grace until the coming of Christ in glory.
  - *Eph 6:10-13 - Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to withstand the devil's strong attacks.*

## Related Doctrines

1. Since God has revealed each and every doctrine to draw us into relationship with Him, and since the Our Father is the model and means by which we relate to Him, **all doctrines** are therefore contained in the Our Father.
2. The Our Father is prayed in every **Sacrament's** rite.

## Common Errors

1. "I didn't have a good relationship with my father; how can I be expected to pray to the Father?" God not only understands the difficulty, He wants to heal the hurt and be that real Father to us. No one is father as God is Father. By coming to experience His Fatherhood, we can come to know the love we never received from a flawed and weak human father. He is able to set right the wrongs and to heal these wounds, as we bring them to Him in prayer.
2. "I should not pray 'forgive us... as we forgive...' because I still feel angry and hurt. I clearly haven't forgiven yet." Ever since the Fall, our feelings are not necessarily under the complete control of our will. Since we can't simply wish our anger away; if we are angry and wish we weren't, we very likely aren't responsible for it. Forgiveness lies in an act of the will. It acknowledges the harm done and the culpability of the doer but chooses to distinguish between the evil action and the person, and to not identify the person with the evil action. For instance, a husband can be angry with his wife for lying, but if he continues to think about her as "the liar" or "that woman who lied to me," he holds it against her. We refuse to forgive when we continue to willfully hold something against another.

### Liturgical Sources

At the Savior's command  
and formed by divine teaching,  
we dare to say:

Our Father...

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,  
graciously grant peace in our days,  
that, by the help of your mercy,  
we may be always free from sin  
and safe from all distress,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

*[Roman Missal, Communion Rite]*

Almighty ever-living God,  
whom, taught by the Holy Spirit,  
we dare to call our Father,  
bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts  
the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters,  
that we may merit to enter into the inheritance  
which you have promised.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

*[Roman Missal, Collect of the 19th Sunday of Ordinary Time]*

May God the Father who has called us  
to be one human family  
fill your hearts with deep longing  
for peace and harmony. ...

May the Son of God who came to share our life  
and make us children of the one Father  
enable you to grow in wisdom and grace  
before God and the human family. ...

And may the Holy Spirit who is the bond of love  
between the Father and the Son  
unite in love all here present;  
may he be the bond of love among you,  
our nation, and all peoples. ...

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on you and remain with you for ever.

*[Roman Missal, Solemn Blessing of Mass of Independence Day]*

From antiquity the Lord's Prayer has been the prayer proper  
to those who in Baptism have received the Spirit of adoption.  
When the elect have been baptized and take part in their  
first celebration of the Eucharist, they will join the rest of the  
faithful in saying the Lord's prayer.

*[Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults 149]*

## Teaching through Beauty

HYMN: Latin Chant of the Our Father



Pa-ter no-ster, qui es in coe-lis: San-cti-  
fi-cetur no-men tu-um: Adve-ni-at regnum tu-um:  
Fi-at vo-luntas tu-a, sic-ut in coe-lo .et in



ter-ra. Pa-nem no-strum quo-ti-di-a-num da no-bis  
ho-di-e: Et di-mit-te no-bis de-bi-ta nostra, sic-ut  
et nos di-mit-ti-mus de-bi-to-ri-bus no-stris. Et  
ne nos in-du-cas in ten-ta-ti-o-nem, R. Sed li-  
be-ra nos a ma-lo.

ARTWORK: *God Inviting Christ to Sit on the Throne at His Right Hand* by Pieter de Grebber [1645]

Christ, ascended in glory, lives to intercede for us at the Father's right hand. In this painting, God the Father, supreme ruler of all, directs Christ to the throne at His right hand. The Son, however, kneels before the Father in an attitude of supplication. He stands eternally before the Father, the Lamb once slain, showing the Father the price of

our salvation—His five holy and glorious wounds. The Holy Spirit hovers in the background, inviting us to draw near to this mystery. Whenever we pray the Our Father, we approach Him in Christ, as the Spirit inspires this prayer in us. The love between the Persons floods our hearts, so that we cry out to the Father as sons in His Son.



## Appendix 5 – Internet References

### About the Bible

Video: “The Salvation Story”, Bishop Robert Barron, Word on Fire, minute 8:50 to 41:40  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKeD7CEozqo>

Video: “When you don’t understand the Bible”, Fr. Mike Schmitz  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNW-galVANO>

### About the Sacraments

Video: “The Sacraments – Lesson 1 Introduction and Baptism”, Fr. Robert Barron  
<https://www.wordonfire.org/study-programs/the-sacraments/>

Video: “The Hour That Will Change Your Life”, Fr. Mike Schmitz  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwwilkrLxTM>

Video: Select any 3 videos from the *Video/Sacraments 101 + 201* section, or those below  
[www.bustedhalo.com](http://www.bustedhalo.com)

#### Sacraments 101 **Playlist**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05YB2jdHLSY&list=PL60396574E0A0B9A2>

Sacraments 201 – Baptism (why we baptize)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05YB2jdHLSY>

Sacraments 201 – Eucharist (what we believe)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMSiHGTBdGk>

Sacraments 201 – Matrimony (more questions answered)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qR41fFtPBzM>

Sacrament of Reconciliation Explained

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfZkq7BABJM&list=RDLVpfZkq7BABJM&index=1>

Sophia Sketchpad **Playlist**

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBdBxtht3DgeyGzlo4IX3\\_YLicfaloVu](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBdBxtht3DgeyGzlo4IX3_YLicfaloVu)

## Great Resources for Catechists

Franciscan At Home

<https://franciscanathome.com/>

Franciscan at Home – Nelson Diocese Landing Page

<https://franciscanathome.com/diocese-nelson-british-columbia>

The Religion Teacher – Jared Dees

<https://www.thereligionteacher.com/>

Catechist's Journey – Joe Paprocki

<https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/about-me/>

Roman Catholic Diocese of Nelson – Office of Faith Formation

Sign on to Coordinator Page: user id **coordinator** password **comeHolySpirit**

Go to Catechist's Corner, or ...

[https://www.nelsondiocese.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=1069727&type=d&pREC\\_ID=1358587](https://www.nelsondiocese.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1069727&type=d&pREC_ID=1358587)

Echoing the Mystery – available in hard copy or e-book

*(perhaps the greatest one-stop reference for catechists as a companion to the Bible and Catechism)*

<https://openlightmedia.com/product/echoing-the-mystery-hardcover/>